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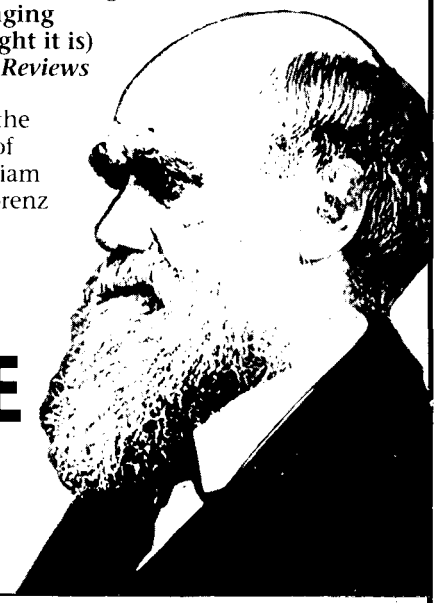

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THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR (ISSN 0003-0937), published quarterly since 1932 by the Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009. For subscription information call 202-265-3808. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. Copyright © 1991 by the Phi Beta Kappa Society.

POSTMASTER: Send all change of address notices, undeliverable copies, subscription orders, and other mail to THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Subscription rates: for individuals, $21.00 one year, $38.00 two years, $5.75 a copy; for institutions, $25.00 one year, $46.00 two years, $7.00 a copy; foreign and Canadian $3.00 a year additional for postage.

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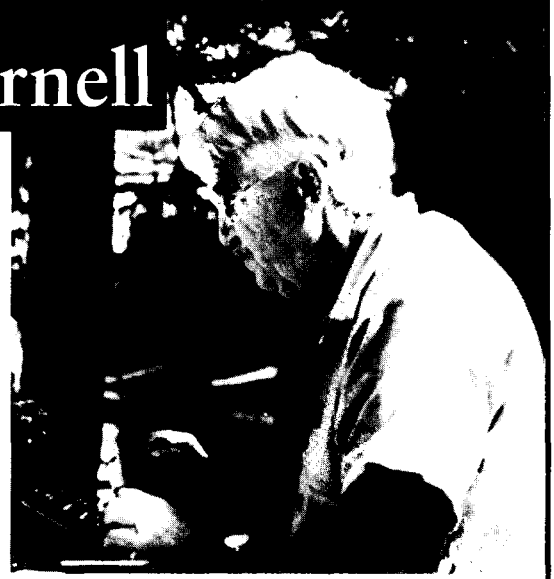

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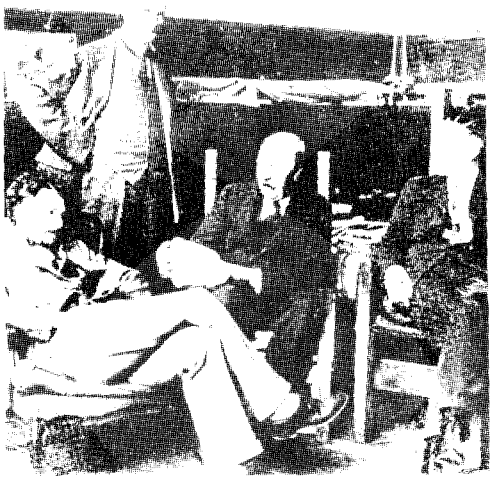

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Life and Letters . . . . . .

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ARISTIDES

Those new institutions of popular and mobile learning, bumper stickers, at least a number of them that show up in my neighborhood, ask me to Visualize World Peace. I try, but I do not find this easy to do. Some advice, I suppose, is more easily taken than other advice. The bitter bumper stickers, unlike the more utopian ones, seem more readily to gain my assent: "Eat well, stay fit, and die anyway," read one such sticker on a car I recently rode behind. It announced this sad truism next to a decal denoting a Teamster's local. A friend reports a car passing him in Colorado whose sticker read not, as many do, "If you love Jesus, honk," but instead, "If you *are* Jesus, honk"—certainly a more interesting proposition. "Have you hugged your kid today?" was one of the first of the popular bumper stickers, one no doubt meant to give all parents a bit of a bad conscience. If I were in the bumper-sticker business, I wouldn't mind running off a few thousand stickers that read, "Have you kicked your role model today?" Now here is a question that gives one something to think about on longish drives. It also gives fine vent to my antagonism to the notion of a role model.

Difficult though world peace may be for me to visualize—if I strain, I think I can see it, though I am saddened to report that it appears duller even than paradise—I can visualize it more easily than a world without such words as *role model*. Such spongy words that don't seem to absorb much truth figure to be around forever. My specific grudge against the term *role model* is, as the best grudges often are, a bit complicated and a touch personal. The term itself comes of bad origins; if it were a race horse, the tout sheet on it would read: Role Model, by Sociology out of Modern Education. But my chief problem with it isn't its origin so much as it is the people off whose lips it comes so happily tripping. When they say "role model" they seem to feel that they have said something not merely felicitous and penetrating but quite magical. What this boy (student, school, ethnic group, country—fill in the subject for yourself) needs is better role models, they smugly say. Sure he does, I generally say to myself, like my cat needs hubcaps.

My first encounter with the term was an indirect and mildly depressing one. It occurred in the late 1960s, when it came to my attention that one of my stepsons, who was bright, good-natured, and with nothing of the rebel or the recalcitrant about him, was not doing very well in high school. I met with his guidance counselor, an obviously well-meaning woman who, I sensed as we began to talk, was herself perhaps in need of a bit of guidance—as was everyone in those days who had to help run a high school of middle- and upper-middle-class kids that was filled with drugs, racial bad feeling, and lots of hopeless educational theory. "Maybe the boy's problem," the guidance counselor suggested, "is that he is *role* instead of *goal* oriented." Role instead of goal, thought I, rolling the phrase around on my tongue; clearly, I was in a place where they let the rhyme fit the crime. If this were true, I asked, in what role does this put me, who is chiefly responsible for his education? No answer. Having thought about this further on my own, in the end I decided to stay on the boy's case, ready to accept the *role* of villain, nag, and less than fully understanding parent. It was no easy thing, but it seems finally to have worked out all right.

I do not have a very exact sense of when *role model* came into vogue, but my guess is that it slipped in the back door just as the word *hero* was escorted out the front. The feeling against heroes had been building for

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some time. One of the chief tasks of the modern biographer, beginning with Lytton Strachey, seems to be, on the way to revealing its subject's dirty little secrets, to show that putatively great men and women are, even as you and I, puny and fallible and, when the biographer's truth is told, really much worse than that. In contemporary fiction, the anti-hero—from Joseph Heller's Lieutenant Yossarian to Philip Roth's Alexander Portnoy—was the dominant character type through much of the 1960s and showed up in novels more frequently than losers at singles dances. All those institutions that used to provide heroic figures—the military, the clergy, politics at the higher levels—no longer did so. *Au* bloomin' *contraire*, they seemed the most mocked, the most scorned and spat upon of all. Heroic action, heroic lives, did not seem a real possibility. As Thomas Carlyle wrote of the eighteenth century, "the very possibility of Heroism had been, as it were, formally abnegated in the minds of all." Or, as they put it in the pages of *Women's Wear Daily*, heroism was out.

As someone who was a young boy during World War II—I was eight years old at its end in 1945—I grew up with heroism forming a good part of my daily psychic diet. The majority of the movies I saw were war movies, and hence movies about heroes, and the rest seemed to be about priests, who were themselves pretty damned—not quite the right word, I realize—heroic, too. The Bible stories that most excited my imagination were those that told of heroic behavior: David taking on and knocking off Goliath, Joseph making his way among the Egyptians, Moses leading that trek of all treks across the desert. Then there were all those fairy tales, with handsome and supremely good princes showing up just when the going got tough, which, as is well known, is precisely when the tough get going. Robin Hood, whose adventures were read to me when I was quite young, also much impressed me. He was a terrific athlete, took from the rich and gave to the poor, had a swell looking girlfriend, and threw lavish outdoor parties. "Hey," as they say nowadays, "he was my kinda guy."

So hyped on heroes was I that I can recall feeling a slight disappointment that my father, who was too old to be drafted, was not a soldier during the war. It took a bit away from his heroic status in my eyes. World War II seemed a war without ambiguities—certainly a seven-year-old could find none—and to be able to wear a uniform was automatically to be a figure deserving of respect, not only in my view but in nearly everyone's. When we traveled on vacation during the war, we always picked up servicemen, and so did a great many other people. One of my first heroes in the flesh was Ozzie Bryer, son of Rose and Frank Bryer, who lived upstairs and who was in the Navy. When he was discharged, he gave me one of his white gob's hats, which I wore with pride and pleasure. Men who had survived heavy fighting in World War II seemed to me immensely impressive. They still do.

War heroes were soon replaced in my small pantheon by athletic heroes. I grew up in neighborhoods where, if one wasn't a good athlete, one had better be witty or extremely wily or fleet of foot. "Very problematic," I can hear a certain kind of feminist muttering as she reads this, but it never seemed at all problematic to me, who was a respectable if never a first-class athlete and a kid who had a hardy appetite for games. A block behind the apartment building in which we lived, down along Lake Michigan, the football team of Sullivan High School practiced. Sullivan's was not a winning team. Its coach was a barrel-chested, short-legged man named Abe Margolis, who used to swear at his players with Yiddish expletives. The word *shtunk*—denoting an ungrateful fool, an unpleasant *schlemiel*—was easily his favorite. The only players the coach never called *shtunk*, at least while I was watching, were two brothers named Gordy and Ronnie Green.

The Green brothers were so heavily muscled that it seemed to me that they must have lifted weights with their faces, for their cheeks, their foreheads, even their hair seemed powerful. Gordy Green was a fullback, his younger and somewhat smaller brother Ronnie a halfback. They were Jewish tough guys of the kind that appear in Isaac Babel's Benya Krik stories: true brutes, or so it seemed to a small boy of eight or nine standing on the sidelines watching them crash into the line, tossing up clouds of dust, trotting back into the huddle unharmed from crushing collision after crushing collision. I admired them without qualification.

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What made a young boy admire two such older boys—boys who then seemed to him men—when he had been told time and again, and in fact quite believed, that it wasn't muscle but brains that counted in life? The first qualification for a hero, in the eyes of a small boy—and not, I suspect, in those of a small boy alone—is the ability to fend off fear. The Green brothers, Gordy and Ronnie, seemed beautifully equipped for this, or so it seemed to me. Far from seeming in any way fearful, they, it occurred to me then, were themselves worth fearing. At that time, without the least hesitation, I should have traded whatever chance I might have had for a good mind for one of their powerful bodies.

It was not long after my admiration for the Green boys had set in that my interest in athletes went national. This came about through my reading a monthly magazine called *Sport*, which I began to do with great intensity around the age of eleven or twelve. The magazine was devoted to the subject of its title, but even more, in those days, to uncomplicated hero worship. *Sport* had nothing to do with criticizing athletes; its editors and writers were as far as possible from being, as a long and justly defunct statesman once put it, "nattering nabobs of negativism." If you were written about in *Sport*, you were, ipso facto, written about as a hero. Nor, best as I can remember, did the magazine go in much for personalities, and certainly never for the dissection of them. A characteristic line, from a piece on the Yankee catcher Yogi Berra, that has rattled around in my head all these years had it that "Yogi likes plenty of pizza in the off-season, when he can generally be found hanging around his friend Yankee shortstop Phil Rizzuto's bowling alley." The same article, written today, might inform us that its subject, with the aid of kin-network therapy, had survived his second divorce in fairly good shape, though he greatly regrets an unfortunate deal on a condominium complex in Acapulco, a leveraged buy-out, in which he had invested heavily.

To *Sport*, too, I owe my first interest in history, for the magazine ran a series of articles under the rubric "The Sport Classic" about great athletic heroes of the past. I recall being much moved by articles on such figures as Jim Thorpe, Bill Tilden, Lou Gehrig, and Red Grange. The theme of these articles was that the great athletes were great-hearted; even famous horses—Man o' War, Whirlaway, Sea Biscuit—were great-hearted. How one acquired a great heart on one's own was a bit less than clear. Sometimes it seemed one was born with it. But more often you worked hard, faced adversity straight on, didn't let life in its harsher aspects defeat you, and if you came through often enough under pressure-laden circumstances, lo!, you made it—you were a hero. This still seems to me not so dumb.

A boy's hero worship almost invariably latches onto heroes whose accomplishments are essentially physical, warriors and athletes chief among them. Not only do these men—they have, historically, overwhelmingly been men—choose to disregard pain but many of them risk premature destruction, which, as Maupassant says in his story "The Horla," is "the source of all human dread." The most rudimentary form heroism takes is that of defying death; and for this reason we honor as heroes those men and women who have knowingly risked—and frequently lost—their lives for a cause they deemed larger than their own lives. One of the reasons that one tends to admire heroes is that they have qualities that one does not have, or at least that one is uncertain about having. Here is yet another distinction between heroes and role models. The former are worth admiring because they are (almost certainly) better than you; the latter aren't truly that much better—that is, apparently, the utility of them—so that it should be no great trick to emulate them.

"I understand the large hearts of heroes," said the garrulous Walt Whitman, "the courage of present times and all times." If so, then you're a better man than I, Gunga Whitman. As a worshiper of heroes, I feel less certain of understanding them. Perhaps this is in good part owing to the fact that I have so seldom in my life been called upon to act heroically. Luck of the draw, I have danced merrily betwixt and between wars, too young for World War II and Korea, too old for Vietnam and those wars that followed it. I have never been called upon to save anyone from drowning—a good thing, too, for I am a poor swimmer—or to pull anyone from a fire, or to fight off an attacker. What the sports announcers call "crunch times," those moments in the game when the pressure is at its greatest, are times that thus far in the game of life I have never known.

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Whenever I have been cited for courage, it has been only for expressing forthright opinions on mildly controversial intellectual matters. The first thing to be said about this is that these matters never seemed all that controversial to me—they seemed, in fact, rather commonsensical—or I should not have been able to be so jollily forthright about them. The second thing to be said is that expressing any opinion in our country doesn't really require anything like courage; in the Soviet Union, in Nazi Germany, in China, saying what one thinks has been to court death. The only penalty one pays here is to be excluded from certain parties, which, to someone who prefers to stay home anyhow, is no penalty whatsoever. Speaking your mind in America is not my idea of courage and nowhere near my idea of heroism.

High school provided lean pickings for hero worship, though a wealth of unimpressive role models were available. One older boy in our school came near to holding hero status in my mind. His name was Roger Berlin. I remember him as being very handsome, though very little interested in girls; not so much a great or graceful as a fearless athlete; and very kind. I don't recall his ever using profanity, which the rest of us boys then used in place of punctuation. There were mildly mythic stories about him: one was that he played tackle football on concrete; another was that, after a high school basketball game, he burst into the visiting team's locker room and took on all ten or twelve visiting players and had eventually to be dragged out, still swinging. The book on Roger was that he was a very nice guy whom you didn't want to get angry; and in my high school, one could not have a better book. What happened to Roger Berlin is, in my mind, a bit vague, a bit misty, as all heroes' post-heroic periods ought perhaps to be. He must at some point have become interested in school, for the word was that, after some rocky years, he shored up as a psychiatrist somewhere in Kansas.

At college I turned in heroes of physical courage for heroes of culture. Although I was much impressed by many of my teachers at the University of Chicago, none came anywhere near qualifying as heroic. Oddly, though it never occurred to me to think myself potentially a poet, poets around this time became heroic figures to me. In *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History,* which I read for the first time only the other day, Thomas Carlyle remarks on the naturalness of the poet as a hero. His claim is that the poet has much in common with the prophet in "that they have penetrated both of them into the sacred mystery of the Universe; what Goethe calls 'the *open* secret.' " I was nowhere near intelligent enough to formulate my hero worship of poets thus, but I did instinctively, and inchoately, worship them. This took the form of my becoming something of a mild great-poets groupie. When a famous poet came to campus, I went to his or her reading, much as other people go to church: with genuine reverence in my heart. I heard and saw in this way E. E. Cummings, Marianne Moore, and Carl Sandburg. I wish now that I had heard and seen Robert Frost and especially T. S. Eliot, who had become rather a widespread hero of culture around this time, or Wallace Stevens, who gave very few readings.

Today, however, I would leave my couch to hear Carl Sandburg only if he read the exact date of my own death and gave an account of my funeral, so little does his mind and talent interest me. My point, though, is not to put down Carl Sandburg, but to show how, with age, one's heroes change. With the passing of years, I have had to smash twenty or thirty busts in my personal pantheon, for the reason that many of the heroes I once much esteemed now seem unworthy of it. As a literary boy and young man, for example, I was a perfect patsy for the writer who was also a man of action. I was never so foolish as to think Ernest Hemingway a hero; I knew that if one was a hero one didn't go around claiming one was a hero, as Hemingway, relentlessly, boringly, did. But I did admire Leon Trotsky, even though I knew enough to abhor communism, and what I admired him for was his ability both to lead the Red Army and to write the *History of the Russian Revolution.*

Along with Trotsky, two other men whom I admired, because they seemed to make moot the question of whether the pen was mightier than the sword by possessing both, were André Malraux and T. E. Lawrence. But they, too, have shrunk a good bit over the years in my eyes. Malraux, I now see, was intellectually rather muddled and a subtle yet altogether too sedulous self-promoter. Lawrence,

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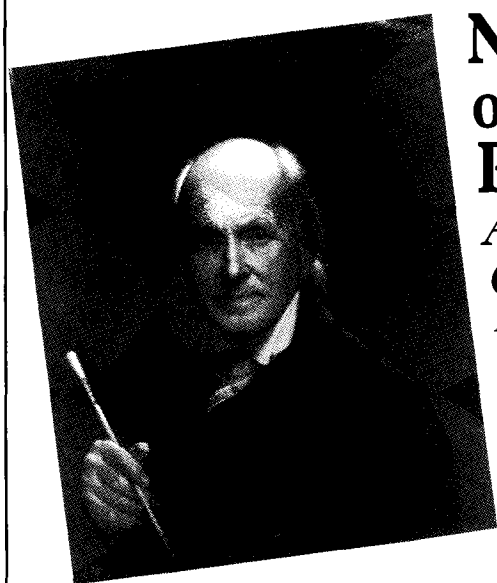

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though his military achievement remains impressive, is perhaps too meshuga to stand in as a genuine hero. Besides, I tend to think there is a good deal to Max Beerbohm's remark that he would rather *not* have led the Arab Revolt than have written Lawrence's apparently wretched translation of the *Iliad*.

The older one gets, the fewer the busts left in one's pantheon. And many of those that are left seem to acquire sadly disfiguring chips. T. S. Eliot has come very close to being a culture hero of mine. I don't think there is much question but that his poetry retains much of its power and is among the deepest and most memorable written in English in the twentieth century. His criticism retains a dignified authority that no other critic in our time has been able to equal; it is interesting and usefully provocative even when wrong. The sad events of Eliot's life—chiefly, those surrounding his first marriage—do not, to my mind, detract from his stature; suffering traversed and understood only makes one more sympathetic and dignified.

No, the real chip in Eliot's bust is his anti-Semitism, which is made all the more dreary by the fact, revealed in the first volume of his letters, that he was capable of the kind of very careful careerism that he would have condemned had it appeared in anyone Jewish. When Eliot, at the age of thirty-two, writes to his mother, "Having got this off, we spent the weekend at Eastbourne, visiting some friends called Schiff—very nice Jews," my heart sinks at the sad thought that a man able to rise above his time in so many ways was not able to do so in this way, too. But it is too late: "very nice Jews," as opposed to all those other Jews, has been written and is out in the world. I still think Eliot a great figure in the history of culture, as impressive as any other cultural figure in this century. Yet although I know he had a kindly side to him, I wish he had allowed for my feelings and stowed the anti-Semitism.

The fact is, I prefer my heroes unflawed. This is tough on them, I realize, but it isn't so easy on me, either. To show you the lengths to which I am prepared to go in making demands of my heroes, I prefer my heroes and heroines to be nice people, people I shouldn't mind taking to a concert or a ball game, having over for Thanksgiving dinner, or playing a little gin rummy with. In literature this leaves out Baudelaire, I realize, also Thoreau and Dostoyevsky. But I can, given these criteria, still nicely accommodate Sydney Smith, Turgenev, Chekhov, Willa Cather, Max Beerbohm, and a few others.

To ask that one's hero be, along with heroic, a nice person may seem an unreasonable demand, and probably is. No one ever asked that Alexander the Great also be a great guy. It is far from clear that Pericles was a nice fellow, and Catherine the Great was in no quarter known as Catherine the Pussy Cat. Schopenhauer, another guy no one ever called nice, said that geniuses, which many world-historical heroes turn out to be, aren't very comfortable in the world. "This," writes Schopenhauer, "explains the animation, amounting to disquietude, in men of genius, since the present can seldom satisfy them, because it does not fill their consciousness. This gives them that restless zealous nature, that constant search for new objects worthy of contemplation, and also that longing, hardly ever satisfied, for men of like nature and stature to whom they may open their hearts." In talking about genius, Schopenhauer is in good part here describing himself. It was Nietzsche, for whom Schopenhauer was a personal hero, who said that every idea has its autobiography. It is I who now say that playing a little gin with Schopenhauer or Nietzsche isn't easily imagined, though I suppose I would do better at gin than at argument with either of them.

The gin rummy test, the demand that a hero be rather a decent and companionable person, almost straightaway eliminates most politicians from the sphere of heroism. The only politician in this century whom I think I should have cared to spend much time with, and whom I also consider heroic, is Winston Churchill. (At the moment, President Vaclav Havel of Czechoslovakia seems another possible hero/gin partner, but then he hasn't yet had sufficient time to prove himself unworthy of my admiration.) In *The Hero in History*, Sidney Hook remarks that "particularly in politics, a medium in which virtues and vices, reason and stupidity, have an entirely different specific gravity than in the clear waters of personal relations and scientific activity, is it difficult to evaluate genius." Hook adds, interestingly, that democratic societies tend not to offer too many political heroes, and that it is part of their own specific genius that they don't. In fact, the only unarguable hero in

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American political life has been Abraham Lincoln, and I suppose that there are still Southerners who would wish to argue against his status as a hero.

Abraham Lincoln was no hero in his own lifetime, which corroborates Sidney Hook's point that democratic societies "usually refuse to glorify their leaders until they are dead." William Hazlitt, complementing Hook, wrote that "mankind are so ready to bestow their admiration on the dead because the latter do not hear it, or because it gives no pleasure to the objects of it. Even fame is the offspring of envy." In recent years in the United States we have had two men put up for heroism immediately after their death, John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., and because of modern methods of research—also known as prying—neither has fared at all well. John F. Kennedy should never have been considered a hero to begin with, and it is only owing to his early death and even more to his Harvard panegyrists, Schlesinger, Galbraith, & Co., that it was possible to stake out a claim for his heroism in the first place; in the second place, with sex scandals and other revelations, he looks smaller and smaller all the time. A charming man, he would have made a fine partner at gin rummy, but as a hero he simply doesn't cut it. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose posthumous reputation has also been besmirched—by sex scandal and by reports of plagiarism—nonetheless in my mind retains heroic status for having conquered fear under seriously fearful conditions. German police dogs, Southern sheriffs, low-grade but truly vicious bullies, none either daunted King or otherwise deterred him from his profoundly moral mission. Yet why do I think he would be a lousy gin rummy player?

Staking out a claim to be a hero in public life has grown more and more difficult. Consider General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, leader of the successful Desert Storm operation in the Middle East. A solid character, General Schwarzkopf, a man who knows his business, suffers fools not at all, dignified and serious, the best type of the modern military man. Have we a hero here, the real article, I wondered, as I saw him easily conquer those most pestiferous of menaces, the modern journalists? Yet one night I learned that he, General Schwarzkopf, was to be interviewed by Barbara Walters. My dubiety was piqued. Why subject oneself to the depthless inanity of the mawkish Wawa-ian grilling? Barbara—I feel certain she wouldn't want me to call her by anything but her first name—Barbara didn't ask the General what sort of tree he thinks he most closely resembles, or how he wished to be remembered (perhaps, after Desert Storm, as a palm tree). But at one point the television camera played over General Schwarzkopf's modest personal quarters: his bed, his footlocker, his few uniforms, and then the camera came to rest on a Bible and a copy of—oh dear, I wish I had never see it—*The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran. What is a man like the General, an earnest, highly intelligent, non-quiche-eating warrior, doing reading such a sententious, sentimental, stuffed-animal sort of book as *The Prophet*. Shuffle the cards, General, while I reconsider your case.

The larger point here is that no one in contemporary life can remain a hero under the ghastly light of modern publicity. One of the chief reasons many of us had so high a regard for the past generation of movie stars—Cary Grant, Gary Cooper, Fred Astaire, Edward G. Robinson; Susan Hayward, Claudette Colbert, Greer Garson, Rosalind Russell—was that they came upon and managed to depart the scene before the advent of the television talk show. Owing to this lucky piece of timing, we were permitted to imagine them as reasonably intelligent human beings. Once we have seen an actor on a talk show or two, the game of considering him as in some even rough sense admirable is up. Even so elegant a woman as Katharine Hepburn, after a talk-show shot or two, cannot sustain her magic. "Give her," a small voice whispers, "a velvet, gentle, but nevertheless firm hook."

Perhaps it would be easier to forget the whole thing and drop the notion of heroes and the activity of hero worship altogether. Yet too much, I fear, would be lost in doing so. When heroes go out, quacks tend to come in. Heroes also happen to represent the culture at its highest reaches. "Only he who has given his heart to some great man," Nietzsche says, "receives the first consecration of culture." An age of skepticism is hardest on heroes. Everyone recalls the famous remark of Mme Cornuel that no man is a hero to his valet. Yet a country without heroes may well turn out to be, spiritually, a country of valets. It was Carlyle who neatly countered Mme Cornuel's remark by saying, "The Valet does not know a Hero when he sees him! Alas, no: it requires a kind of *Hero* to do that.

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William James, who along with his brother Henry happens to be a hero of mine, in his essay "The Importance of Individuals" recounted an unlearned carpenter saying in his hearing, "There is very little difference between one man and another; but what little there is, *is very important.*" I happen to agree. I also agree with James when he remarks that for "a community to get vibrating through and through with intensely active life, many geniuses coming together and in rapid succession are required." As examples James cited the "sudden bloom of a Greece, an early Rome, a Renaissance." Did he know that, in late Victorian England, of which in a sense he was a part, history had offered another such time. Or is it the case that one's own time always feels as if it is not only bereft of heroes but populated almost exclusively by pygmies?

In our own day, there seem to me no true heroes of culture, Balanchine being the last such figure. I think Mother Teresa heroic, at least from what I have read about her; and I think Alexander Solzhenitsyn a great literary-political hero: he took on the Soviet Union and emerged victorious. Mikhail Gorbachev keeps crossing back and forth across the line of heroism, at too fast a pace to determine if he is or isn't himself a hero in history. One of the ways he could prove he is such a hero is to dethrone Lenin by making it plain that he was no hero but one of the most villainous characters in modern history, a man who, as an old joke had it, was the terribly exorbitant interest on Karl Marx's *Kapital*. Naturally, I view all these people from a distance; more precisely, with the exception of Solzhenitsyn, whose books I read, all I know about them is what I read or see on television, which is probably not enough. It may well be required that, for someone to retain heroic status, we not know too much about him. Writing to his sister-in-law about meeting Professor and Mrs. Josiah Royce in France, Henry James noted: "I shall never, in future, embrace any man's philosophy till I have seen him—and above all till I have seen his wife."

Tell me whom you admire and I shall tell you who you are. Schopenhauer, for example, until well past fifty, kept a gilt statue of Buddha on his desk next to a bust of Immanuel Kant, while over his couch hung portraits of Goethe, Shakespeare, Descartes, Claudius, and (again) Kant. Montaigne doesn't use the word *hero*, but in a brief essay titled "Of the most outstanding men," drawing on all of history up to his time, he finds three men "outstanding above all the rest": Homer, Alexander the Great, and Epaminondas, the fourth-century B.C. Theban general and leader known for his good character. And he cannot help mentioning Alcibiades: "For a man who was not a saint, but what they call a man of the world, of civil and common ways, of moderate eminence, [he lived] the richest life that I know to have been lived among the living, the one composed of the most rich and desirable qualities." Henry James's heroes included Balzac and Napoleon, whom Hegel once referred to as "that world-soul."

Napoleon is one of those figures whom one can admire without particularly liking. Sigmund Freud is another. Like Napoleon, he has, or at any rate his ideas have, become tyrannical. Goethe was easily the greatest man of letters in all of modern history, yet I wished he hadn't let Eckermann fawn and hang around quite so long, thus giving the lie to Hazlitt's notion that "no really great man ever thought himself so." Some heroes seem to me beyond such—or even any—criticism. Beethoven blew his nose in his hand, treated his nephew wretchedly, was clearly more than a little nuts, and yet remains Beethoven, which is more than sufficient. But then Beethoven was both a genius and a hero, and his heroism consists of his getting the most out of his genius under greatly arduous conditions.

Not all heroes are geniuses nor geniuses heroes. All things being equal—perhaps the emptiest phrase in the language, since they never are—I prefer my heroes not to be geniuses. To be a genius is to have too great a head start in life. I much prefer heroes whose accomplishments amount to genius. I admire, for example, those writers who persevere and finish a great thick work of literature: Gibbon, Proust, Joyce, and, though less in this line, Macaulay, whose natural garrulity would have made anything other than a thick work quite impossible. I find heroic, too, those who have endured through long stages of unjust neglect and kept working with a strong sense of their worth. Schopenhauer qualifies in this regard; he put a masterpiece into the world in his early thirties and had to wait until his late fifties for it to be recognized as such. So, too, does Barbara Pym, whose novels were

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suddenly found insufficiently sexy, noisy, blaguey, you name it, during a violent period in Anglo-American culture, but who stayed the course, eventually finding acceptance and her true readership.

Endurance is a form of heroism open to those of us who neither have genius nor live obviously dramatic lives. Samuel Johnson, who may have been a genius, is another hero of endurance, playing through poverty, poor health, and feckless patrons and winning in the end by dint of hard work and powerful intelligence. Henry James seems to me heroic for continuing to write in the only way he knew how—with the throttle of complexity all the way out—in the face of his need to make a living and the flagging interest of his contemporary readers and editors, and hewing always to "the jolly great truth that it is *art* alone that triumphs over fate," which in his case it most happily did. Both Samuel Johnson and Henry James were also heroes of integrity, another mode of heroism open to those of us without genius.

On the face of it, one cannot hope to know about all the unknown heroes, those persons who do their job and know whereof they speak. I thought of this category of hero when I read a one-line obituary about one Leonard Greenburg, professor of preventive medicine at Yeshiva University, who died at ninety-eight. Now ninety-eight is the age at which every professor of preventive medicine ought to peg out. How much more impressive Dr. Greenburg than the woman who heads my own university's health center and who recently had to retire, giving as her reason bad health. I am also partial to those who, despite natural disadvantages, hang in there. In Ronald Hayman's biography of Marcel Proust I read that when Proust completed his military training he was graded sixty-third out of a class of sixty-four. I think that the fellow who finished sixty-fourth, who was a worse soldier even than Marcel Proust, has to be granted heroic status of some sort. As the beer commercial has it, "Buy that man a Miller."

My own heroes are figures who love life without being taken in by it: David Hume instead of Rousseau, Montaigne instead of Voltaire, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., instead of Emerson, Degas instead of van Gogh, Brahms instead of Wagner. Some among them are skeptical—"as we said of the Valet," writes Carlyle, "so of the Sceptic: He does not know a hero when he sees him!"—theirs is never a skepticism that sours them on the world. They have an air of reality about them. They are undazzled by the world while remaining charmed by it. They are able to keep the seemingly contradictory notions in their heads that life is both a game and a deadly serious business, a play full of laughter and heartbreak.

As I grow older, I find that I am simultaneously less trustful of heroes and increasingly in need of them. To worship false heroes is quite as foolish as worshiping false gods, and in hero worship as in other activities there is no fool like a less-than-young fool. I take some small satisfaction that such hero worshiping as I have gone in for has never entailed subscribing to a hero's doctrine as part of the deal. One carries enough luggage through life without having to lug around another person's ideas. On the other hand, true heroes remind me of life's possibilities—of how difficulties can be overcome, of how often perseverance pays off, of how without integrity self-disgust becomes one's regular companion, of how lovely life can be when fear is conquered, of how gallantry is the highest form of elegance.

Had I at any time in my life been a true hero—had I won the big game, or survived the jungles of Vietnam, or gone into the burning building to save the infant—I wonder if I might regard myself differently than I do now. At a minimum, I would have had the self-assurance of knowing that, under pressure, I had come through. As things are now, I only hope that, should the occasion for heroism arise, I *might* come through. A vast difference between the two—knowing and hoping. Contemplating heroic lives, lives distinguished by physical or psychological courage, and sometimes both, helps to fortify one's own soul and inspire one to be a little better than, deep down, one worries one is. One of the many fine things about having been a hero, I should think, is that one doesn't have to think about heroism. Never having been called upon to prove one's mettle gives one a lot to think about late at night, and particularly between gin rummy games, spades double, twenty-five points a box, Hollywood-Oklahoma.

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A Life of Learning

PAUL OSKAR KRISTELLER

THE INVITATION EXTENDED TO ME by the American Council of Learned Societies to deliver the Charles Homer Haskins Lecture comes to me quite unexpected and even as a surprise, for my background is foreign and untypical (though I have lived in this country for over half a century). The subject that interests me most, the history of Western philosophy and thought, has become increasingly unfashionable and has been called irrelevant and useless, elitist and Eurocentric, and even undemocratic (perhaps I could make it more palatable by calling it the study of interconceptual space). My method, which tries to combine the philosophical interpretation of original texts with the pertinent skills of history and philology and of their auxiliary disciplines such as diplomatics and chronology, paleography and bibliography, is now considered hopelessly traditional and even antiquated, as I have been told more than once by foundation officials, administrators and colleagues, reviewers and critics.

This occasion prompts me to reflect on my experience and my opinions, and I apologize in case they displease my audience. I have been exposed over the years to many words and thoughts that displease me, and I might claim for once my right to the freedom of speech. I do not think that I am unwilling to stand corrected when some of my statements are refuted by solid facts or arguments, and I am quite ready to admit that there are many areas and problems that lie outside my special field of interest and that deserve to be explored by other scholars. I also admit that my advanced age may make me obtuse and unresponsive to certain new subjects or methods that may turn out to be perfectly legitimate. Yet I cannot bring myself to accept or condone certain views that are in agreement with some current political or other trend but that are flatly contradicted by firmly established facts or arguments that their proponents, knowingly or unknowingly, choose to ignore, using what I

✪ PAUL OSKAR KRISTELLER is Frederick J. E. Woodbridge Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Columbia University and author of numerous books, including, most recently, *Renaissance Thought and the Arts*. The above essay is adapted from Professor Kristeller's Charles Homer Haskins Lecture of April 1990, sponsored by the American Council of Learned Societies, which has also published the lecture as ACLS Occasional Paper, No. 12.

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like to call the *argumentum ex ignorantia*, a powerful argument when the readers and listeners are as ignorant of the contrary evidence as are the speakers and writers.

The life of learning, as the title of this series has it, or the life devoted to learning, is a somewhat ambiguous phrase, if I may be allowed to borrow the method of my analytical colleagues in philosophy. It means, of course, that as scholars we always continue to learn (and unfortunately also to forget), from the beginning to the end of our life. Yet the phrase also means that we are dedicated to learning or to scholarship, words that in modern English have been used to designate all knowledge outside the natural and social sciences. All other Western languages known to me speak of the philosophical, historical, and philological disciplines as sciences, recognizing that they contain and accumulate valid knowledge based on rigorous methods (they are even predictive when they discover new texts or documents that confirm a previously proposed opinion). In English, the terms *learning* and *scholarship* do not indicate, as they should, that we deal with knowledge that is as valid and as methodical as that of the sciences, though it deals with different subjects and uses different methods. The more recent term *humanities* has the additional disadvantage that it indicates a kind of knowledge that is at best useless and dispensable and at worst provides some kind of genteel or snobbish entertainment. Moreover, the term *humanities*, and even more the term *humanism*, invites a confusion with philosophical or secular humanism and with humanitarianism, thus involving humanistic scholarship quite needlessly in philosophical and religious controversies and confusing it with social and political ideals that are valid and desirable but completely irrelevant to our cause, and all this confusion serves as a temptation or excuse for diverting our meager resources towards other efforts and activities that may have great merits, even greater than we can claim for ourselves, but that are completely different from ours. We cannot help following ordinary English usage, but we are confronted with a case where this usage, as attested by Webster or the short Oxford dictionary, turns out to be insufficient for the discussion of a serious philosophical or scholarly problem. Another such case is the word *reason*. In ordinary English, it denotes the capacity to draw valid inferences from ascertained facts, whereas a different and more comprehensive notion of reason, generally used and understood by philosophers from antiquity to fairly recent times, called *Nous* in Greek and *Vernunft* in German and identified by Kant as the faculty of principles, is admittedly untranslatable into modern English and has disappeared not only from current usage, but also from contemporary philosophical thought to the great detriment of all philosophical, scholarly, and scientific thought.

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When I now try to talk about my background and upbringing to serve as an explanation of my later development and work as a scholar, I should like to emphasize that I consider inheritance and education, in agreement with most serious scholars in both the Eastern and Western worlds, as necessary, but not as sufficient, causes of intellectual development—otherwise, all persons with the same family background and education would turn out to be the same, whereas in fact each individual person is different and in a sense unique.

I was born in Berlin in 1905 into a well-to-do Jewish middle-class family, and since my father died at the time of my birth, I was brought up by my mother, the daughter of a banker, and by my stepfather (the only father I knew), the director of a small factory. My parents had no higher education, though several of their relatives did, but they respected all cultural pursuits and made many sacrifices to further my education. My mother was interested in literature and art, visited museums and exhibitions, attended lectures and theater performances, read a good deal, and assembled a small but good library that was at my disposal. She also knew French, English, and some Italian, and I probably inherited from her a great facility for languages that turned out to be very helpful in my later work and career.

From age six to nine, I attended a good public elementary school and learned in short time reading and writing in two scripts, Gothic and Roman, as well as arithmetic and other simple skills. From 1914 to 1923, I attended a public classical school, the Mommsen-Gymnasium in Berlin, which offered nine years of Latin (eight hours a week), eight years of French (four hours a week), six years of Greek (six hours a week), a great deal of German composition and literature, some history and geography, a good deal of mathematics (including elementary calculus), some physics, chemistry, and biology, and a year or two of English (which turned out to be my fifth language). I had to do a lot of homework, and I did not mind it, for I found the assignments interesting and challenging. I had some occasional difficulties and setbacks, but I basically liked and enjoyed my school. In all the languages that I studied I learned grammar and parsing, instead of guessing the vague content of long sentences. In mathematics I learned precise reasoning since we were supposed to understand and repeat all proofs, solutions, and constructions, not just to memorize them. I learned to compose clear papers consisting of an introduction and a conclusion and of several well-distinguished parts of which the first did not presuppose the second but vice versa, and I still write that way. In addition to some German and French classics (including Shakespeare in German), I read in school Virgil and Tacitus, Homer and Sophocles, authors who have remained my favorites throughout my later life. My teachers were for the most part

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well trained and knowledgeable, and they included such scholars as Walther Kranz and Ernst Hoffmann, well known among students of the classics and of ancient philosophy.

I also had a lot of extracurricular activities. I was never interested in sports, but I did a lot of swimming and hiking and, later, mountain climbing. I had private lessons in French and English conversation, and I learned a bit of Hebrew, Dutch, and Russian, languages that I failed to keep up, whereas I later learned Italian, and it is now one of my best languages, and a bit of Spanish. I was a voracious reader and began to buy and collect many books, especially of history and biography, and of German and French literature. I eagerly visited the Berlin museums and especially liked the older Italian, Flemish, and Dutch masters (who were well represented in these collections), and I saw many exhibitions of modern German and French art (Berlin had been, ever since the seventeenth century, an outpost of French culture, in spite of the political and military conflicts between the two countries, a fact that seems to be widely unknown). On a number of vacation trips made with my parents or with my school and later alone, I saw many parts of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland and enjoyed the landscape as well as the architectural monuments and art collections of many cities. I also wrote a lot of poetry and continued to do so long afterwards.

The study and practice of music played a major role in my life. I began early to take piano lessons, frequently heard opera and concert performances, and continued to take advanced lessons until my university days. I played the works of all major classical composers from Bach to Chopin and Brahms and also some modern German and French music, but I disliked some of the Romantics, especially Liszt and Wagner.

My interest in philosophy developed early. In my literary readings, I came upon Ibsen's play *The Emperor and the Galilean,* and although this is not one of his best works, it was my first exposure to Neo-Platonism, as I was to discover much later. I read Plato in school and learned from him to follow reason as far as it leads us, to look for principles rather than for specific instances, and to distinguish clearly between knowledge and opinion. At home, I read more Plato, some Aristotle, and above all, a lot of Kant. By the time I graduated from school with honors in 1923, my mind was made up to study philosophy and its history, and my parents accepted my decision, although they were disappointed in their hope of seeing me enter the family business, and also worried about my choosing a career unknown to them and offering no prospects for a well-paid position.

After graduation, I went to study at Heidelberg. The university, apart from the beauty of the city and its surroundings, had a good reputation

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because of the high quality of its faculty, and I was especially attracted by Ernst Hoffmann, my schoolteacher of Greek, who in the meantime had become a professor of ancient philosophy at Heidelberg. Needless to say, for an eighteen-year-old youth, it was attractive to get away from home for the first time. All I had to do was take a train, rent a furnished room, and sign up at the registrar's office, showing my high school diploma. The tuition was modest since the university, as all others, was run by the government. I spent nine semesters at various universities, five of them at Heidelberg and the others at Berlin, Freiburg, and Marburg. At Heidelberg, my teachers in philosophy included Heinrich Rickert, whose interpretation of Kant never convinced me, but who developed a theory of the historical method that has great merit and is not as well known as it deserves; Karl Jaspers who introduced me to Kierkegaard and to existentialism; and Ernst Hoffmann who lectured on Plato and Aristotle and also on Plotinus. In Freiburg, I heard Richard Kroner who introduced me to Hegel, and Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, who was not an interesting lecturer, but whose books I read with great profit. Encouraged by a fellow student, I went in 1926 to Marburg to hear Martin Heidegger. He was then working on *Sein und Zeit,* his masterpiece, and gave impressive lectures, as well as a seminar on historicism. I also came to know him personally, but I resisted the temptation to stay with him because he kept his doctoral students waiting for many years, and I returned to Heidelberg to write a thesis on Plotinus under Hoffmann.

Aside from attending lectures and seminars, I spent a lot of time on preparing seminar papers and on reading a great variety of books that interested me or that I considered as important for my studies. I read all major philosophers from the Pre-Socratics to Husserl, including Nietzsche, whom I never appreciated.

My formal minors were mathematics and medieval history. I attended some lectures and seminars on higher mathematics, though with difficulties, and I read reference books on calculus, the theory of functions and of numbers, and differential equations. I once wrote a seminar paper on a complicated demonstration that occupied only a few printed pages and grew in my summary to a talk of half an hour since the author had presupposed and omitted many theorems and proofs, which I had to supply from other sources. This showed me that I was not able to become a professional mathematician. But I learned once and for all that we should always concentrate on problems that we may hope to solve, and that, in our attempts to prove something, we should always prefer a simple and "more elegant" proof to a complicated one. I also began to understand the link between the mathematical and philosophical doctrines of such thinkers as Descartes and Leibniz.

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In medieval history, I heard Karl Hampe and Friedrich Baethgen in Heidelberg, and Edmund E. Stengel in Marburg, and thus I acquired valuable skills in diplomatics, chronology, and the source analysis of documents. Without the knowledge of medieval rhetoric, which I acquired from Hampe, I should not have been able to recognize the links between medieval and Renaissance rhetoric, which I described and developed many years later.

I also studied without credit a number of other subjects that I found useful or interesting. German literature and philology, comparative linguistics, physics and psychology, church history, musicology and art history (including Far Eastern art of which I have remained an admirer ever since).

I defended my thesis on Plotinus in 1928 and published it in 1930. It contained only a fragment of what I had planned to write about Plotinus, and the published thesis is quite different from the one I presented for the defense. My hope of writing a more complete monograph on Plotinus was never fulfilled since I was later occupied with other topics. I still consider Plotinus one of the greatest philosophers of all times, and I am convinced that his influence on later thought has been much greater than is usually recognized.

After I had passed my doctoral defense rather successfully, my hopes for an academic career were suddenly disappointed, and I chose to study classical philology in Berlin, to improve my classical training for further work on ancient philosophy, and also to prepare for a State Board examination in Greek and Latin that would enable me to teach these subjects in a Gymnasium. I took courses with Werner Jaeger and Eduard Norden, and also with Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, Friedrich Solmsen, Richard Walzer, and others, and learned textual criticism and paleography from Paul Maas and classical linguistics from Wilhelm Schulze. I also read or reread most major classical authors (without translations, but with commentaries, where necessary), and I also learned to write (though not to speak) Latin. I learned from Jaeger to pay attention to the literary genre of a text and to the patterns and topics connected with that genre, and from both Jaeger and Norden the importance of ancient rhetoric and of its complicated relationship with philosophy. I also learned to study the history of philosophical terminology. All this proved to be very useful for my later work. During the same period, I revised my thesis on Plotinus, wrote several book reviews, a seminar thesis on Cicero's interpretation of Plato's ideas, a paper on the origin and meaning of the term *Orexis* (desire) in philosophical literature, and a state board examination thesis on one of the speeches of Pericles in Thucydides.

Having passed my state board examination with honors in 1931, I

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went to see Heidegger in Freiburg, asked him whether he would sponsor me for an academic career *(Habilitation)*, and proposed as my subject Marsilio Ficino, who interested me as the leading representative of another important period in the history of Platonism. Heidegger agreed, and I went to Freiburg to work on Ficino, while attending Heidegger's lectures and seminars. I frequently saw him about my thesis, played the piano at his home (as I had done also in Marburg), and obtained the friendly support of several historians and classical scholars on the Freiburg faculty, including Eduard Fraenkel. In 1932, I received from the German Research Foundation a fellowship of a type reserved for future university teachers. By 1933, I had finished the groundwork for a book on the philosophy of Ficino, and in the spring, I went to Italy to look at manuscripts and early editions of Ficino, especially in Rome and Florence. The results were greater than expected, for I found a number of unpublished works of Ficino, especially letters and early treatises, some of them unknown to previous scholars, and I planned to publish them in an appendix to my book.

While I was in Italy in March and April 1933, I suddenly learned that the newly installed Nazi government had issued a law that excluded all persons of Jewish descent from academic positions and from a number of professions. I immediately realized that this was the end of my career in Germany and that it would be necessary for me to emigrate if I wanted to pursue my work. Instead of staying in Italy, I returned to Germany to settle my affairs, moved from Freiburg to the home of my parents in Berlin, and stayed there until early in 1934, writing nearly one-half of my book on Ficino. I also corresponded with foreign scholars and institutions to prepare my emigration, and I taught in a private school directed by Vera Lachmann. When some Italian scholars, including Giovanni Gentile, expressed interest in my work, I went to Rome in February 1934, met Gentile and others, did some work as a translator, and also pursued extensive manuscript research in the Vatican and other Roman libraries. It was at this time that I became aware of the large number of potentially interesting works, not only of Ficino, but also of his friends and correspondents, predecessors, contemporaries and followers, that were not only unpublished but even unknown to exist, and I began to collect descriptions and microfilms of these writings. In the fall of 1934, I moved from Rome to Florence where I obtained a position as a teacher of Greek and Latin at a private school for German refugee children and also a modest post as an assistant lecturer of German at a branch of the University of Florence. I also pursued extensive manuscript research in Florentine libraries, and the results were as rewarding as they had been in Rome.

In the summer of 1935, I obtained, through the help of Gentile, the

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post of a lecturer of German at the Scuola Normale Superiore and at the University of Pisa where I spent three fruitful years. The Scuola is a community of graduate and postgraduate fellows, selected on the basis of a national competition; its students are among the best in Italy, and many of them later become college and university professors. Living among them and working with them, I made many friends and became a part of the Italian academic scene. Gentile had my Ficino texts published in two volumes as *Supplementum Ficinianum* (1937) and started to publish with me a series of unknown humanistic texts edited by students and graduates of the Scuola Normale and by other scholars. The first volume appeared in 1939, and volume 19 is now at the press. I also finished my book on Ficino, translated it into Italian, and made arrangements for its publication. In addition, I published several articles and book reviews in various Italian periodicals. At the same time, I traveled throughout Italy to explore all major libraries for Renaissance texts, with the usual encouraging results. I was helped by a method learned from more experienced scholars—that is, I did not merely work from indexes, but I systematically scanned all available printed catalogues and unpublished inventories, and I thus came upon authors and texts that had not even been known to exist. These trips also gave me an opportunity to see a large number of Italian cities, their monuments and art collections, as well as their libraries and archives, and as a tourist interested in art history, I learned to appreciate the variety of local schools and traditions, in architecture, sculpture, and painting, as well as in the decorative arts and crafts, and to understand the political and cultural history of a town or region from its monuments, museums, and libraries.

In the spring of 1938, Hitler visited Italy, and during his stay all German refugees were either put into jail or had to report daily to the police. This was an omen of worse things to come. In the summer of 1938, the Fascist government issued a decree that excluded all persons of Jewish descent from academic and other public positions, and those who were not Italian citizens had to leave the country within six months. I immediately lost my position in Pisa and had to make plans for a second emigration. I wrote to many colleagues and friends, especially in England and the United States, and I received a number of encouraging replies, yet they did not lead to a quick solution. Ludwig Bertalot, a German private scholar living in Rome, offered me a paid position as his research assistant, and from October 1938 to January 1939 I worked for him in Rome, mainly on a volume of the catalogue of Vatican manuscripts that he was preparing, and at the same time, I continued my own work. In January of 1939 I received an invitation from Yale University, where I had several American and German friends, to come there as a teaching fellow and to give a graduate seminar on Plotinus. I left Italy

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where everybody I knew behaved with the greatest kindness, and I arrived in New Haven in February, where I was cordially received by many old and new friends, especially by Herman Weigand and Roland Bainton who obtained for me the hospitality of the Yale Divinity School. I had received a non-quota immigration visa on the basis of my invitation, and I enjoyed the opportunity to continue my work as a teacher, although my spoken English was at first quite halting and improved but gradually. I also learned that my position would not last for more than a term, and thus I had to look for another job for the fall of 1939. Fortunately, I received several lecture invitations upon my arrival, and I visited many scholars at various universities whom I had met before or to whom I had been introduced. I also was able to get one of my lectures published right away. I finally was offered a position at Columbia as an associate in philosophy for one year, with a modest salary, part of which was paid by the Carl Schurz Foundation. In June 1940 I married Edith Lewinnek whom I had first met in Germany and who has been my companion and adviser ever since, while pursuing her own career as a specialist in rehabilitation medicine and as a faculty member of the New York University Medical School.

It turned out that I was to spend the rest of my life at Columbia. For nine years I remained as an associate with an annual contract, then I was made an associate professor with tenure in 1948, a professor in 1956, a Woodbridge Professor of Philosophy in 1968, and retired in 1973. The University was my home before I became a citizen (in 1945), and over the years I have had close relationships with many colleagues at Columbia and also at other institutions, not only in philosophy, but also in history and classics, in Italian, French, German, Spanish, and English literature, in Oriental studies and in bibliography, in religion, musicology, and art history, and also in political science and sociology. I have learned a lot from my colleagues, especially about Aristotelianism from John H. Randall and Ernest Moody, and about the history of science from Lynn Thorndike, and I greatly profited from the rich resources of our library and from the competent help of its staff. I regularly taught lecture courses on late ancient philosophy and Renaissance philosophy, mostly for graduate students in different departments, and also seminars, often jointly with Randall and others, on some of the major philosophers from Plato to Hegel. I also taught a course on research techniques and was involved in a large number of dissertations in many departments.

My book on the philosophy of Ficino appeared in English in 1943, the somewhat better Italian version in 1953, and the German original only in 1972. Most of my other books are collections of lectures or articles, composed on different occasions and for different audiences. Yet I always pursued topics that interested me, and not those that others

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asked me to investigate. I never hesitated to intrude on neighboring fields, when pertinent, and I never minded hiding some of my best remarks in footnotes or digressions or in the middle of a paragraph, and thus most of them have been predictably overlooked. I did not learn early enough that to make an idea stick you have to put it into the title and conclusion or abstract of a paper, never mind what the rest of the article contains. Yet I did present my views on some major Renaissance thinkers in a series of lectures delivered and published at Stanford, and a similar series on Hellenistic philosophy was recently given at Pisa. My studies on Ficino emphasize his metaphysics and its original as well as its ancient, patristic, medieval, and early humanist elements.

I hope I have helped to clarify the significance of Renaissance humanism, showing from its literary production and from its professional activities that it was centered in the study of grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy, and not in logic, natural philosophy, or metaphysics. Humanism did not destroy Aristotelian scholasticism, as is often asserted, but co-existed with it through the sixteenth century and beyond. On the other hand, Renaissance humanism had close connections with medieval grammar and rhetoric. I called attention to several neglected texts of medieval rhetoric and to the fact that medieval rhetoric was not limited to sermons and letters, as is often claimed, but included a sizable body of secular oratory, especially in Italy with its city republics. I also showed that the school of Salerno, often presented as purely practical, made a notable contribution to theoretical and scholastic medicine from the twelfth century on and also initiated that alliance of philosophy with medicine (rather than with theology) that was to remain characteristic of the Italian tradition down to the seventeenth century. I also showed that Aristotelian scholasticism as taught at the University of Bologna had a documentable influence on the early Tuscan poets of Dante's generation, and that humanists, contrary to a widespread belief, did not oppose or try to abolish the vernacular, but actually cultivated and promoted it as part of a bilingual culture that is characteristic of both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. I also emphasized that for a proper understanding of the various philosophers and other authors, we should not only study their writings, but also their life and professional activities, the curriculum of the schools and universities where they studied and taught, the place their works occupied within the contemporary classifications of the arts and sciences, the traditions of the literary genres to which their various writings belong, and finally the meaning, sources, and origins of the technical terms used by them.

I have attempted throughout my life to pursue scholarship for its own sake, not for the pursuit of personal or political goals, and I survived two emigrations because the international academic and scholarly commu-

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nity had a sense of solidarity and of objective standards of work. Anybody who had something to contribute was welcome, and I found friends and supporters in two foreign countries because they liked my skills and my knowledge, not my face or gender, race or religion, national background or political opinions. My career was based on my work as a scholar and teacher, which I pursued with the support of my university, of several other institutions, learned societies, and foundations. The humanities, as I understand them, were then an integral part of the curriculum of all colleges and even of the better secondary schools. A graduate student could expect to teach in college even before he got his degree. The colleges gave a general cultural background to the majority of their students who went into business or the various professions, and a solid preparation, including foreign languages, to the future graduate student who thus acquired a familiarity with the general context of his field before he began the more specialized research for his dissertation. Moreover, there was at least some tolerance among the various disciplines, and each specialist was willing to respect the contributions made by other fields or even by other schools within his field. Also the general public and the news media had some interest in, and a moderate respect for, the representatives of scholarship.

This situation has profoundly changed for the worse since the 1960s. The general public and the news media show complete indifference or even contempt for scholarship, except when a sensation is involved, as in the case of the Leonardo manuscripts discovered in Madrid in 1967, which were widely and also wrongly reported, or when a subject is related to entertainment, tourism, or financial investment, as is the case with the history of music and of the theater, with archaeology and art history, or with the study of manuscripts and rare books. The admission and graduation requirements of the secondary schools have been constantly lowered and have almost disappeared, and it is now quite common for students to graduate from high school without having learned the most elementary skills of literacy or arithmetic. More recently, the colleges, and even many of the most renowned colleges, have admitted students who are in need of instruction in remedial English and composition. A diploma from a high school or even from a college is considered as a mere entrance ticket for a better-paid job, and nobody seems to understand any longer that such a diploma should be earned by acquiring a certain amount of knowledge and skills. The graduate schools have thus far managed to maintain their standards, but it remains to be seen how long they will be able to do so if the preparation of their incoming students continues to deteriorate. The natural sciences have been able to maintain their standards, thanks to their prestige and the acknowledged usefulness of their technological

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applications, though some of their less useful fields, such as pure mathematics, theoretical physics, or taxonomic biology, are receiving less support than they deserve. The social sciences, which have made excellent contributions based on historical scholarship, have to some extent been dehistoricized and have tended to base their findings on the dubious evidence of statistics, questionnaires, or opinion polls and to disregard the fundamental distinction between facts and goals or values. They have made ambitious claims in defining, predicting, and solving social and political problems, and these claims, though they have been more often wrong than right, have been taken at their face value, not only by the general public, but also by many philosophers and other academics, and have contributed to the public and academic decline in the support of the humanities.

Finally, many representatives of the humanities have changed their emphasis towards contemporary history and literature, topics that should not be neglected, to be sure, but that often do not require the rigor of detailed research, as it is needed for the study of earlier periods. Faddist theories based on sensational claims rather than on solid evidence are widely acclaimed, and the advocacy of political, ideological, or religious causes is brazenly proclaimed to be a substitute for evidence. A widespread anti-historical bias has put historical studies on the defensive, and in the academic power game, faddists and ideologists are often preferred to serious younger scholars, not to speak of the steady loss of teaching positions in subjects that are no longer required or considered useful or interesting. It has been noticed in more than one area that the number of persons of any age, properly trained and competent to deal with certain specialties, amounts to less than a handful in the entire country.

We have witnessed what amounts to a cultural revolution, comparable to the one in China if not worse, and whereas the Chinese have to some extent overcome their cultural revolution, I see many signs that ours is getting worse all the time, and no indication that it will be overcome in the foreseeable future. One sign of our situation is the low level of our public and even of our academic discussions. The frequent disregard for facts or evidence, of rational discourse and arguments, and even of consistency, is appalling, and name-calling is often used as a substitute for a reasonable discussion. Every interest group demands immediate action in favor of its own goals and easily resorts to noisy demonstrations or even to violence. What we need is a careful examination of all pertinent facts and arguments, followed by a rational decision that may be a fair compromise between the groups and interests involved. Instead of recognizing that along with many problems that we cannot solve (at least at the present) there is a solid core of knowledge to

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which we should hold on and which should set a limit to our arbitrary thoughts and actions, we encounter a pervasive kind of skepticism or relativism that claims that any opinion is as good or justified as any other. Every statement made before the last five years or before the latest fad is considered hopelessly antiquated, and "traditional scholarship" has become a term of opprobrium. I hold on to the view that our scholarship is cumulative, though not static, that many thoughts and opinions of the distant past may have some interest or validity for the present and future, and that there is a large body of important subjects that has not even been mentioned in the literature of the last five years.

Our relativists proclaim that words have no fixed meaning and that we are free to decide what each word in a past writer must have meant (like Humpty Dumpty who decides by himself that a word means just what he chooses it to mean). I gladly admit that words change their meanings in the course of time and that old words disappear while new ones are coined. Yet we can and must rely on a firm tradition of lexicography in the various languages concerned, including the large *Oxford English Dictionary*, that tells us what a given word meant at a given time, in a given context, and to a given writer. We are thus able to refute obvious blunders by the straight evidence of original texts and documents and with the tested methods of historical and philological scholarship. Interpretations based only on translations or secondary literature should be rejected outright unless they are confirmed by original texts. While sticking to problems that we can solve, we should reject the claim that all solvable problems are trivial and that all important problems are insolvable except by speculation. The world of history and philosophy is a puzzle that can be solved but slowly, by constantly adding new questions and answers and thus modifying the earlier ones. It may be argued that religious faith transcends the limits of secular knowledge, but within the range of human knowledge, the plain facts ascertained by experience and reason cannot be contradicted by an appeal to conventional or fashionable opinions that claim to be true in a higher sense.

I do not know what the future will bring, and my expectations are rather grim, not only for our education and scholarship, but also for our economic, legal, and political future. I hope, like Cassandra, that I shall be wrong.

I am holding on to the methods and convictions that I have followed all my life, and I am not convinced that anything that has recently been proposed to replace them is valid. I wish the best of luck to the many younger scholars who follow our methods and ideals and who will invariably correct our results and make new additions to our knowledge. They are likely to have a harder struggle than we did in getting

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recognized in a world that has become basically hostile to scholarship and to learning. I hope I am speaking also on their behalf since they cannot afford to say what they think. I also hope that there will be support for humanistic scholarship and research, to help it defend its place in the colleges and universities, and also in the schools and in the public world, so that perhaps it will regain some of the ground that it has lost in recent years.

I have no illusions about the good old days (they had their own troubles), and I am aware of the limits imposed on philosophy, science, and scholarship in this immense world, which is complex and irrational and to a large extent (contrary to what many people believe) removed from our control and manipulation. I sometimes wonder whether my life in many of its phases (as the life of many other human beings) has been like that of the rider on Lake Constance who barely reached the shore before the ice he had crossed melted behind his back.

Yet I like to justify my fascination with the past, and especially with the history of philosophy and of learning, by stating my belief that the past remains real even after it has disappeared from the scene. It is the task of the historian to keep it alive and to do justice also to the defeated and to the neglected, at least to the extent to which they deserve to be remembered.

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Michael Oakeshott

1901–1990

JOSIAH LEE AUSPITZ

MICHAEL OAKESHOTT would have enjoyed his funeral. There was almost nothing remarkable about it.

The pelting rain and rough winds that swept the Dorset coast on the morning of December 24 had subsided into a mild blue sky by the early afternoon when the funeral party of a few dozen people converged from several points in England and abroad on the village church at Langton Metravers. The service followed the simplest Anglican rites, and the village pastor, as he likes to be called, began the eulogy sparely, with the dates of the deceased's birth and death, his education, war record, academic career, the names of his surviving family, the thirty-year period of his local residence.

There would have been little more to say, had not the pastor recorded his own astonishment upon opening the *Daily Telegraph* of December 21, 1990, and reading: "Michael Oakeshott, who has died aged 89, was the greatest political philosopher in the Anglo-Saxon tradition since Mill—or even Burke." The next day's *Times* brought equally portentous praise: over a sixty-year career of writing and teaching, Oakeshott had done more than anyone in this century to make conservatism intellectually respectable. The *Guardian* called him "perhaps the most original academic political philosopher of this century." And the *Independent* devoted the better part of a page to an erudite essay on the less overtly political aspects of the philosopher's work, comparing it to that of Montaigne in its "composure, humor, gentleness, and self-restraint."

"It appears," the pastor said, "that we have had a very great man living amongst us." To verify this, he had opened a few of Oakeshott's books, but these, he confessed with a wrinkled brow, would require further study. He consulted instead neighbors, a shopkeeper, a delivery-man. They reported that the deceased was a kind man, a cheerful man, very helpful, generous, unpretentious, and remarkably youthful. He had

✪ JOSIAH LEE AUSPITZ, who is secretary of the Sabre Foundation, has written for *Political Theory*, *Commentary*, and other journals.

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a sparkle in his eye, a vigorous gait, a rapport with children, and drove to Swanage, the nearest city, in his blue MG sports car. Yet no one locally had the slightest idea what the sprightly octogenarian did. His wife, an artist, had a studio in the village, but the philosopher never spoke of his own work.

The parson impressed upon his audience that the Oakeshotts lived modestly in Acton, a cluster of quarry-workers' cottages on the outskirts of the main village. He was struck that so eminent a man should have dwelt in so humble a place. He compared Oakeshott to St. Francis, an analogy he found so gripping that he thenceforth referred to the deceased MG owner as Francis rather than Michael, even as the coffin was lowered into the earth.

As the funeral party walked to the churchyard and thence to the Village Hall for sherry and tea, the philosopher's former colleagues and students from the London School of Economics mingled with his Dorset neighbors, his family, and a few old friends. The conversation centered on the lucky change of weather and on Oakeshott himself. At sundown, Christmas Eve, the party dispersed.

His widow returned to their cottage and the visits of kind neighbors, who took with good humor the parson's suggestion that they sat in a hermit's hovel. By Acton standards the Oakeshott cottage was ample, formed of both halves of what had been a two-family house. A small kitchen, dining room, and upstairs guest bedroom and bath occupied what had been one dwelling; a living room, study, and upstairs bedroom the other. What might have been a second upstairs room had been pulled out to give the living room a two-story skylit space over the fireplace. The wall space that was not covered with bookshelves displayed Christel Oakeshott's abstract paintings. In all, the place had more standard amenities than the Oakeshotts' Covent Garden apartment, which had lacked a private bath during most of their residence in London.

The furnishings of the cottage were not so much rude as miscellaneous. The kitchen had two small refrigerators, an old stove, a toaster oven, space heater, and mismatched cabinets. A single piece of carpet, bought at a church rummage sale, covered the floor. Oakeshott had charted the irregular pattern of the appliances and cabinets on the back of the carpet, laid it out in the garden, and cut it exactly to fit.

The dishes, cutlery, chairs, rugs, and couches in the house were mostly bought secondhand, at the local flea markets and at the Swanage Oxfam shop where Oakeshott also assembled much of his wardrobe. As a young man he had been a dandy, famous for lecturing in a yellow velvet jacket with a red rose pinned to the lapel. His Dorset attire gave no clue to this past.

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A playful touch, a gift from devoted friends, brightened the living room: an antique musical bird cage with a tiny metal lovebird hung in a window facing out onto the garden. The small dining room had just enough space to seat three and house an upright piano, which the Oakeshotts made available to an Acton child for practice.

But the main furnishings of the cottage were Oakeshott's books. He had disposed of most of those he considered merely informative and retained a consummately civilized library. In his later years he took to giving away some of his more cherished volumes, but still there remained shelves upon shelves testifying to years of enjoyment of history and fiction, philosophy and poetry, memoirs and essays, and pleasant hours of browsing in used-book stores. In his last year, he reread the works of one of his favorite Americans, Willa Cather.

Among his personal treasures were an odd assortment marking his own family and education: a Church of England missal translated into Latin, picked up as a curio by his father, a Fabian civil servant; a memorial volume from St. George's School, Harpenden, a Quaker-sponsored, progressive, coeducational public school that he had attended during World War I; a green leather-bound set of Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*, given him as a prize for undergraduate studies at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge; a carefully annotated paperback copy of Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* from his university days at Marburg and Tübingen in the mid-twenties, with a wad of his notes still tucked into the pages.

A shelf above his desk held the several editions and translations of his own modest output.* In all, there were two major treatises separated by forty years, the second thoroughly revising the grounds of the first, about two dozen essays collected under overlapping thematic headings, an anthology of political readings, a critical edition, and a co-authored book on horse racing.

Though a gracefully bookish man, Oakeshott, as a philosopher, put

* *Experience and Its Modes* (Cambridge University Press, 1933), *A Guide to the Classics, or How to Pick the Derby Winner* (with Guy Griffith, London: Faber and Faber, 1936), *The Social and Political Doctrines of Contemporary Europe* (edited readings, with introductions, Cambridge University Press, 1939), Hobbes's *Leviathan* (edited, with an introduction, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), *The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind* (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1959), *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (London: Methuen, and New York: Basic Books, 1962), *On Human Conduct* (Oxford University Press, 1975), *Hobbes on Civil Association* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), *On History and Other Essays* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, and Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes and Noble, 1983), *The Voice of Liberal Learning* (edited by Timothy Fuller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989). Not collected in these volumes are over a hundred essays, book reviews, and miscellany, as well as unpublished lecture notes from his course in the history of political thought, correspondence, manuscript and notebook materials. In April 1991, Liberty Press of Indianapolis will issue *Rationalism in Politics: A New Expanded Edition*, authorized by Oakeshott and edited by Timothy Fuller, with six additional essays, including one previously available only in manuscript.

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little trust in the printed word. "A philosopher is not, as such, a scholar; and philosophy, more often than not, has foundered in learning. There is no book which is indispensable for the study of philosophy. And to speak of a philosopher as ignorant is to commit an *ignoratio elenchi*; an historian or a scientist may be ignorant, philosophers merely stupid."

Not one of his own books had a proper bibliography. Even his magisterial edition of Hobbes's *Leviathan* contained a list entitled "Books for Further Reading," which was limited to five modern titles, the most recent being a 1934 work by Leo Strauss. His footnoting was sparse and meant to amplify or amuse rather than to engage in academic diplomacy or display. In scholarly discourse, he never rattled off references, affecting instead an English amnesia for the names of works on which he was expert.

Yet when it came to suggesting an apt title, he was like a wise old herbalist dispensing time-tested remedies. If one were working on a problem, he had just the volume to advance one's thinking. If one were going on a trip, he would present the perfect travel memoir of that place. As a houseguest, he would rummage around for hours in used-book stores until he found just the right volumes to leave as a present for each member of the host family.

Shortly before his death, he put into his wife's hands Elinore Pruitt Stewart's memoir of ranching in Wyoming, *Letters of a Woman Homesteader*, which concludes: "I have tried every kind of work this ranch affords, and I can do any of it. Of course, I am extra strong, but those who try know that strength and knowledge come with doing." Having done most of the pottering around the house and garden during their thirty years of marriage, Michael also left at his desk a newly acquired Reader's Digest home repair book, *How to Do Just About Anything*, a title that gently mocked his famous critique of Rationalism.

His knack for prescribing the right book was of a piece with the tact that marked his conversation. Conversation requires entering obliquely into the world of others, and Oakeshott had an uncanny gift for it. He never held forth. He saw conversation not as a scored recitative but as a spontaneously improvised dance in which each participant responds to the movements of the others. A clairvoyance in anticipating the direction of an interlocutor's thought enabled him to enter the flow with gravity or humor, a nod or a monologue, as the rhythm of talk required.

He especially enjoyed conversation with women. In his own generation, this was taken as a mark of unsoundness, or worse, of amorous proclivities. Oakeshott was guilty on both counts. He did love women. And he also took them seriously as intellectuals. The combination was not always happy. Tending to romanticize the capacities of the women

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he knew, he was bound to suffer occasional disappointments. Should the rare student or colleague in whom he had placed high intellectual hopes turn out to be unexpectedly obtuse, he took it especially hard if the person were female.

A conversation with Oakeshott on philosophy might take many unexpected turns and last for long hours, or might, as he put it in one of his essays, be "put by for another day but never concluded, . . . [with] the participants as playfellows moved, not by a belief in the evanescence of error and imperfection but only by their loyalty and affection for one another."

"Loyalty and affection for one another"—is the abiding memory of the students who had him for individual tutorial. His normal procedure was to ask the tutee to suggest a writer or a text with which to begin their weekly conversations. If Oakeshott detected a spark of receptivity to philosophy or history, the two modes of understanding he was intent to teach, all rules were then off. Meetings scheduled for an hour might stretch to two or three. Sometimes the student would be asked to prepare a paper, but not as a regular requirement. Tutor and tutee might prolong the talk for an entire term before the first short essay was assigned.

Oakeshott's lack of assertiveness in these sessions was unfeigned. His view of what he had to teach left little room for eristic. He believed that teaching was also learning. The teacher had to study his pupil, had to attend to the manner as well as to the matter of the lesson. Moreover, "some activities, like intellectual inquiry, remain always activities of learning." In a university, a tutor and his tutee were both learners, of differing degrees of competence and experience. The aim of a tutorial, as opposed to a lecture, was not to convey organized information, or even to impart a sense of how to interpret and use it, but to bring the student along with oneself to a new level of understanding. Oakeshott's tutees would come away from these sessions without notes but with an example that would, in time, strengthen their appreciation of what Oakeshott called "the intellectual virtues":

> How does a pupil learn disinterested curiosity, patience, honesty, exactness, industry, concentration and doubt? How does he acquire a sensibility to small differences and the ability to recognize intellectual elegance? How does he come to inherit the disposition to submit to refutation? How does he not merely learn the love of truth and justice, but learn it in such a way as to escape the reproach of fanaticism? And beyond all this there is something more difficult to acquire: namely, the ability to detect the individual intelligence which is at work in every utterance, even those which convey impersonal information. . . .
>
> The intellectual virtues may be imparted only by a teacher who really cares about them for their own sake, and never stoops to the priggishness of mentioning them. Not the cry but the rising of the wild duck impels the flock to follow him in flight.

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Conversation for Oakeshott was not merely the preferred pedagogical method. It was for him the very basis of education, and a metaphor for civilization itself. Each educational encounter was in its small way an initiation into civilized discourse—into what Dilthey called a *geistige Welt*. The languages of science and mathematics, of arts and letters, of sport, religion, the trades, and the professions were all for him part of a "conversation" that made up the human inheritance. Only in entering this conversation could one become fully human. Education was everywhere the price of entry. For the human birthright consisted not in artifacts but in the modes of intercourse that gave rise to them. These one could possess only by learning them.

The ultimate business of education, then, was learning to be a human being. It might include training in a trade or a skill or a discipline. But to focus on the merely employable or certifiable aspects of education truncated one's vision of human possibility. The teacher, however humble his sphere, had to be understood and respected, and to understand and respect himself, as the agent par excellence of civilization. "He may be excused if he finds the present dominant image of civilized life too disagreeable to impart with any enthusiasm to his pupils. But if he has no confidence in any of the standards of worth written into this inheritance of human achievement, he had better not be a teacher; he would have nothing to teach." The calling of the teacher was neither more nor less than to initiate the pupil into "the conversation of mankind."

In Oakeshott's essays, indeed, conversation is presented as "the appropriate image of human intercourse," and it bears so integral a relation to his person and his practice as to make it also an accessible image with which to approach the more difficult parts of his philosophical work. The notion of conversation sets the tone of his later philosophy, reflects his leading sensibilities, and suggests the program of inquiry he followed.

His view of conversation, like his practice of it, is non-hierarchical, non-directive, and non-assertive. In a conversation, as opposed to a disputation, one voice cannot hope to dominate the others. There is no fixed agenda. There is no standard external to the conversation itself by which to judge the utterances made. There is no final point or destination or resolution or decision to be reached:

> In a conversation the participants are not engaged in an inquiry or a debate; there is no "truth" to be discovered, no proposition to be proved, no conclusion sought. They are not concerned to inform, to persuade, or refute one another, and therefore the cogency of their utterances does not depend upon their all speaking in the same idiom; they may differ without disagreeing. Of course, a

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conversation may have passages of argument and a speaker is not forbidden to be demonstrative; but reasoning is neither sovereign nor alone, and the conversation itself does not compose an argument.

Conversation is one way of translating—and reinterpreting—the Greek *dialektike,* which from the earliest times has been seen as central to philosophy. Oakeshott returns it to its most inclusive meaning. In contrast to the two philosophers he first admired, Plato and Hegel, and to Aristotle, upon whom he later came to rely, Oakeshott uses the notion of conversation to demystify philosophy itself. Instead of fastening on "dialectic" as the aspect of reasoning that places philosophy at the very highest rank, he portrays the philosopher's voice as merely one among many in a broader discourse.

The essence of conversation in his view lies in the diversity of voices that may enter into it, and the ability of each to enjoy and acknowledge another without losing its own integrity. The speakers pursue the talk for its own sake, both because they have something serious they want to talk about and because, as human beings, they enjoy the interplay. Philosophy is concerned with the character and limits of each of the voices. It may put its remarks affirmatively or critically, with ardor or resignation, in an appreciative or dyspeptic tone, but it always has the same kind of thing to say: that each voice is less than complete, that its truth to itself, its authenticity, emerges from a specific context, and that there can be discerned in each voice "languages" that are at once the common heritage of humanity and open to the individual modulations of a given speaker. Because philosophy has no subject matter of its own, it attends only to the conversation itself, listening carefully to each speaker. It is a quintessentially conversable voice because it limits itself to reflecting upon the utterances of the others.

The pace and cadence of Oakeshott's prose harmonize with the conversational image. His writing follows the rhythms of the spoken word without stooping to the colloquial. It presents, at its best, an elevated diction purged of the usual lecture-hall tropes. There is rarely an enumeration of essential points to assist the taker of notes, little refutation of other writers, none of the logician's focus on paradox, scant analysis of cases, an absence of jargon. One theme seems to flow effortlessly into another with a subtlety and nuance that may disconcert the reader accustomed to heavier hands: Can any writing this seductive be sound?

And there may be more substantial causes for unease. The image of civilization as conversation does not clip the wings of philosophy alone. It dissolves also the absolute claims of all other voices. It suggests that each and every human achievement is contingent upon others, that there

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is no preordained pattern, no standard for human intercourse not already present within it as an inheritance. It thus joins sensibilities not often found in tandem. On one side, it encourages reverence: everything we are and we have we owe to what has come before. On another, it frees the imagination to doubt and to dare: we become what we learn and choose to make of ourselves; our birthright is to find a voice of our own. Oakeshott's union of piety with adventure, tradition with individuality, seriousness with playfulness, reverence with skepticism, affection for human frailty with searing criticism of error is not easily classifiable in twentieth-century philosophy. In a world preoccupied with labels and isms, he defies easy categorization. To the reader who seeks in philosophy a fixed doctrine or method, his writing seems irritatingly elusive.

Yet undergirding Oakeshott's eloquence and his imagery is a rigorous logical structure of his own composition. To make place for a conversational sensibility, he reworks the way in which Western philosophy takes account of variety in experience. In so doing, he has left his mark on a central category: modality.

"Modality," F. H. Bradley observed, "is not an alluring theme." Like critical philosophy generally, it lacks substantive content. Modal distinctions are the philosopher's way of dealing with variety without invoking facts, natural kinds, individuals, or classes. One does not speak of the Golden Delicious, the Granny Smith, and the McIntosh as modes of an apple, though they are varieties. But one does speak of modes of perceiving, cognizing, or eating an apple, modes of being, modes of judgment, modes of the syllogism, modes of the musical scale, modes of transport, and grammatical moods, a variant of modes. Modes mark the line at which judgmental distinctions are treated as differences of kind rather than degree. Modes do not take up time or space, though there may be temporal and spatial modes. Modal distinctions are compossible rather than mutually exclusive. Like the voices in Oakeshott's conversation, they may coexist without conflicting.

To speak of a mode is not simply to notice variety, but to insert some active principle of mind into the discussion of it. Modal distinctions follow some pattern, rule, or order that is the product of human intelligence. It is for this reason that Hegel rejected Spinoza's view of intellect and extension as the two universal modes *(Modi)* of substance: since the notion of modality already presupposes a world mediated by mind, intellect cannot be *modally* coequal with extension. And it is for the same reason that philosophers hewing to a strictly empiricist line studiously avoid the category except in its narrowest technical usages within logic.

Oakeshott's first book, *Experience and Its Modes*, proposed a concep-

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tion of modality that has stamped his thinking ever since. He summarized the theme for the dust jacket of the first paperback edition in 1985 (the 1933 and 1966 hardback editions of one thousand copies each having been sold out):

> Modality: human experience recognized as a variety of independent, self-consistent worlds of discourse, each the invention of human intelligence, but each also to be understood as abstract and an arrest in human experience. The theme is pursued in a consideration of the practical, the historical and the scientific modes of understanding.

Oakeshott's usage is unusual in restricting modality to "self-consistent worlds of discourse" or (in the book itself) "worlds of ideas." A mode for him is not, as it has been for most philosophers, a general principle of differentiation; it is a coherent construct, a world unto itself that portrays the world at large under a set of abstractions peculiar to itself. Thus, science is a way of looking at the entire world through a limited set of (mainly quantitative) ideas. A similar pattern of abstractions defines history, practical activity, and, in a later essay, poetry.

The philosopher's role is to discern the leading ideas that each mode postulates. Much as an accomplished portraitist evokes a human face with a few strokes, Oakeshott captures the organizing abstractions of a mode of human discourse.

This he originally conceived as an idealist enterprise inspired by Hegel, who saw the business of the philosophical sciences as "the derivation and cognition of . . . particular modes *(Weisen).*" Similar efforts in this century can be found in the delineation of "forms" of the spirit by Collingwood and Croce. Unlike these two writers, Oakeshott refuses to give any ranking to the modes. He declines to put philosophy at the top of a scale, with history and science below. He also severs philosophy radically from the history of it. Though much of his work was devoted to the history of political thought, he considered the activity of being a historian modally distinct from philosophical reflection proper. The philosopher makes use of a tradition of inquiry, but for him it is timeless, present in his imagination as a store of examples and suggestions. Oakeshott followed his first university lecturer in philosophy, McTaggart, in excluding the dimension of time from a purely philosophical criterion.

Yet in other respects, Oakeshott's approach betrays his early academic training as a historian. (An undergraduate degree in history was his only formal certification.) His distinctive use of modality transposes to a philosophical idiom the historian's everyday practice in identifying persistent patterns of thought and action. A history of an architectural

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style, for example, or of a literary genre, an institution, or a political doctrine depends upon identifying a shifting but relatively stable set of characteristics that compose an identity (the baroque, the novel, the modern university, Rationalism). Oakeshott's modes raise such characteristics to the level of a coherent ideal construct. They set forth patterns that have achieved a logical as opposed to a merely circumstantial or doctrinal integrity. Oakeshott concedes that his modes have developed historically. Their interest to philosophy, however, consists in their having achieved an "ideal character" that may be sketched without reference to time and place.

He recognizes a limited number of self-consistent modes: at first, science, history, and practice; later, in *The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind* (1959), "poetry," which stands for aesthetic experience generally; still later, in *On Human Conduct* (1975), he revises his terms to recognize "modes of association" in practical life, of which the most notable is "civil association" or the rule of non-instrumental law. (This fulfilled a project laid out in his first extended discussion of law, "The Concept of a Philosophical Jurisprudence," which appeared in 1938.) In *On History and Other Essays* (1983) he returns to the discussion of the historical mode and to the rule of law—two topics on which his work, spanning half a century, will not soon be surpassed.

Each of his modes is a systematic composition of ideas. One might, following Locke, call them complex as opposed to simple modes. They correspond to only one of the terms Hegel uses for modality, *Weise*, as opposed to *Modus*. The German *Weise* suggests a way or *manner* of thought and action, and this captures exactly Oakeshott's intention. A mode for him qualifies the world "adverbially"; it modifies on-going activity, enabling us to experience the world historically, practically, scientifically, poetically, as we choose. In the conversational metaphor, the modes are the "voices" by which we can develop our own way of speaking.

Though Oakeshott's portrayal of modality as a world of discourse shares the concern with language common among philosophers in the English-speaking world, it contains a speculative dimension lacking in the (largely Viennese) fashions that came to dominate the post-war Anglo-American mainstream. It leaps beyond the method of "concrete cases"; Oakeshott cannot examine a case without inquiring into the organizing ideas that are presupposed in recognizing it as a case. And since Oakeshott's modes define their own standards of truth and relevance, they rule out the view that language is meaningful only if it is "falsifiable" with respect to some external reality; the reality to which a mode refers is always internal to it.

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Oakeshott's philosophical gift is connoisseurial rather than analytic. He identifies the provenance and excellences of each mode, and within it distinguishes what is generic from what is merely incidental. This requires a systematic intelligence, but one weighted toward *l'esprit de finesse* rather than *l'esprit géométrique*. Oakeshott has a philosophical discernment akin to the practical acumen that makes someone a good judge of character. He fastens on the ideal character of whatever comes his way, distinguishing what is coherent and enduring from what is merely idiosyncratic.

This same capacity carries over to his non-philosophical writing. In his studies of political thought, his reviews, and even his polemical essays, he is able with great dispatch to enter into thought remote from his own, give an account of it on its own terms, and evoke the unstated sensibilities that it conveys. His discussions of individual writers are exemplary for exposing the underlying logical structure and pinpointing organizing concepts.

An especially influential example is to be found in a book of readings first issued in January 1939 entitled *The Social and Political Doctrines of Contemporary Europe*. It contained original texts for the doctrines of Representative Democracy (or Liberalism rightly considered), Catholicism, Communism, Fascism, and National Socialism. Oakeshott selects texts that let each doctrine speak for itself, with one exception. Hitler at that time permitted only an expurgated version of *Mein Kampf* to be translated into English, and the German publisher would not allow the Leader's fundamental tenets to be translated in Oakeshott's reader. In the absence of direct quotation, Oakeshott provided "Some Notes on the Doctrines of *Mein Kampf*," a précis of the systematic elements of Nazism—its theories of race, blood, leadership, and individuality—that "separate it firmly from every other current doctrine."

Oakeshott's few published writings on religion (and, as he early considered taking a degree in theology, there are doubtless unpublished materials as well) give further evidence of his eye for the way in which ideas hang together. He would appear to have viewed Western Christianity as having achieved a flexible ideal character that made the historical element dispensable, philosophical rationales irrelevant, many dogmas open to radical reinterpretation, but certain images, such as the Fall and the Crucifixion, essential in some form to its doctrines of consolation, moral responsibility, and divine love.

That Oakeshott should have become known as a political philosopher says more about the cast of the twentieth century than of his own mind. He appears to address politics mainly because it displays the most egregious of the confusions he wishes to dispel. The word *politics* does

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not appear in the body of his first book, which presents religion as the epitome of "practice." But the view of modality that he develops puts him on a collision course with modern political rhetoric. If practice is modally distinct from science, history, philosophy, and poetry, it follows that a politics which purports to be derived from scientific, historical, philosophical, or aesthetic truths is fraudulent. Oakeshott is unflinching in drawing out this conclusion. He dwells not on the easy targets—Nazi racial theory, dialectical materialism, the mythic claptrap of the Italian futurists and Fascists—but on the attempts to ground democracy in self-evident philosophical truths, to root religion in theories of nature and history, or, indeed, to put any activity on a rationalized basis.

He lets his criticisms fall where they may. The founders of the American republic, whose political wisdom he admired, are faulted for their excessive rationalism. Augustine, whose Christianity is perhaps closest to Oakeshott's own, is footnoted in tandem with Trotsky for the error of seeing in history a design with practical bearings. Hayek and others with whom he sympathizes on matters of policy are criticized for making a theoretical fetish out of an ideal of freedom.

As Oakeshott sees it, ideological excess is deeply embedded in Western Christianity and thence in modern thought. The conditions under which Christianity became a proselytizing religion in its first four centuries gave undue prominence to a "morality of ideals" over a morality of custom and habit. Organized for conversion, Christendom was prone to mistake moralizing for morals. When in modern times its ingrained weakness for creeds combined with the vocabulary of modern science, a new die was cast. Rationalism emerged on the scene.

Rationalism consists in an exaggerated faith in what is technical, premediated, rationalizable, and (in its misreading of the mode) scientific. It recognizes only articulated as opposed to tacit forms of knowledge. It views the world as a series of problems to be solved by direct means and the application of the most advanced knowledge. In politics it supports the demand for a theoretically grounded ideology; in morals, for explicit ideals deduced from nature; in education, for vocational training in the techniques rather than the languages and modes of civilized discourse. The past four centuries have, according to Oakeshott, been especially favorable to its growth. The enfranchisement of new classes, the establishment of new nations, the rise of new industries demanding trained workers, a mobile and expanding population—such factors give rise to "new men" seeking an abridgment of tradition, looking for quick answers, preferring progress to precedent, and often deeply resentful of the individuality they have not had the leisure to cultivate. Rationalism is a syndrome Oakeshott describes, deplores, and accepts as an enduring element in modern Western thought.

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Its dominance is evident in "the politics of the felt need," which afflicts parties of both Left and Right. When politicians speak of the need to solve social problems and see the aim of the state as policy, or planning, or national purpose, they fall into the language of Rationalism, regardless of the substantive content of their prescriptions. Oakeshott has no direct remedy—the search for direct remedies is, after all, a rationalist trait. But in essays and reviews published between 1947 and 1949 in the *Cambridge Journal*, which he also edited, he does focus on three countermeasures to abate the worst excesses. The first is the dispersion of power to limit the monopolistic appetites of the state, the labor unions, and large corporations. The second is adherence to the rule of law, which guarantees the rights of property and association that enable people to pursue self-chosen rather than collectively imposed visions of the good. The third is an insistence on a spacious view of education, in opposition to the rationalist's narrow focus on manpower training and civic indoctrination.

Oakeshott's anti-Rationalist essays have a polemical edge that his work loses after the immediate post-war years. He was concerned to draw a firm line between wartime thinking and civilian life. At other times his interest in current political affairs quickens only when they touch on the university.

In 1951, when he succeeded Harold Laski to the University Professorship of Political Science, the London School of Economics was not the most congenial place for a man of his views. It had been founded by the Fabians, Oakeshott's father among them, as a trade school for a new governing class. Undergraduates from all over the world had flocked there in the expectation of learning exactly what Oakeshott averred could not be taught. Like a pacifist at a military academy, an anti-Rationalist at the London School of Economics had to give an account of himself.

All the more so since Oakeshott's chair carried with it the chairmanship of the Department of Government. For fifteen years, until the London School of Economics moved to three-year rotating chairmanships, Oakeshott ran the department. By all accounts he presided over an era of good feeling unusual in large academic departments devoted to politics. But he still had to answer the question of what it was, given his views, he presumed to teach.

His response was to reaffirm in a ringing series of essays the liberal character of the university. "Greed or the desire to appear abreast of the times" often led universities to accept chairs dedicated to negligible topics. The political interests of the dons themselves, many of whom had been seconded into government, led them to devote courses to their current projects. "But if every don were to teach undergraduates what he

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himself is interested in, and if every professorial chair were held to entail or to authorize a counterpart to itself in undergraduate education, there would be little in these days to distinguish a university from a mad-house."

What universities could teach about politics, he said, is no different from what they could teach generally: the explanatory modes of discourse—science, history, and philosophy—and the intellectual virtues that might be imparted with them. The study of politics, therefore, had to use that topic as an occasion for initiating students into these modes. Happily, in two of them, history and philosophy, there was a literature serviceable to the task.

When Oakeshott retired in 1969 he devoted himself to further contributions to this literature.

It was in that year that I first met him. I came not as his student or colleague but as an admiring, dissatisfied reader of *Experience and Its Modes*. The book suggested questions about the character of practical knowledge that could not be addressed without violating its own modal categories. If science and history were categorially distinct from practice, how were we to describe the way in which, for example, case histories and scientific research inform the practice of medicine? His critique of Rationalism seemed to me to sidestep this question; it exposed the abuses of technical knowledge without providing a nuanced philosophical vocabulary with which to discuss its intelligent use. Conversely, there was the problem of the practical aspect of science and history. Were not scientists and historians practitioners of their disciplines and to that extent also in the practical mode? And if science, history, and philosophy all had an explanatory or theoretical character that made them fit for a liberal university, did they not all in this sense partake of a common practice of inquiry that blurred the modal distinctions among them? I visited him in his office to air these questions, and I returned a year and a half later for a longer discussion.

Such issues had occurred to him as well. He was working on a book that would, among other things, deal with them. A correspondence developed. In 1974 when he came to America for a lecture he asked if my wife and I had an extra bed to break the monotony of academic guest suites. A year later, on another such trip, he again spent a few days with us. Everyone in our family had the benefit of his conversation.

When *On Human Conduct* appeared in 1975, I already knew from his letters the refinements that would resolve the anomalies of the earlier book. He now treated any settled activity as a practice, so that he could speak of the practice of history or of science or of theorizing generally. The coherence of each of the explanatory modes he now rooted in the

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order of inquiry pursued: science inquires into a world seen in terms of processes, history in terms of contingent conduct, philosophy in terms of the conditionality of experience generally. He was thus able to retain the integrity of the several "voices" in civilization in a way that gave more scope to the interplay of the modes. The greater suppleness of this approach also enabled him to accept a limited role for "theorem-making" (or what the Poles and others call praxiology) within the non-theoretical practices. In all, he now had the basis for a conspectus of modes of theorizing.

But what I had not anticipated was an extension of his concept of modality into the arena of law. Oakeshott's eye for ideal character had discerned a "small composition of related ideas" in the emergence of the states of modern Europe, and in philosophical reflection upon them. He called this composition "the civil condition" and the form of human relations it specified "civil association." This denoted not a doctrine or a political tendency, but a self-contained mode of association more commonly called the rule of law. As a modal complex it could be detached from historical contingency and understood philosophically in terms of a few organizing ideas.

Much as an explanatory mode like science or history defines its own standards of truth and relevance, a legal system defines its own sphere. It is a self-consistent and self-authenticating world in which law *(lex)* serves as a language of civil intercourse among citizens *(cives)* in accordance with a set of public conditions *(respublica)*. Oakeshott uses Latin terms for such matters to create a technical vocabulary (his first attempt at jargon) to distance his discussion from everyday political rhetoric. He uses the terms *civil* and *civility* in the root sense to pertain to citizenship. And he limits the word *politics* to the activity within civil association of debating the desirability of *lex*.

His civil association is thus neither an empirical generalization nor a prescription for action but a leap of philosophical imagination to define the minimal conditions for a rule of law regime. Oakeshott shows that the postulates of civility are few. Democracy is not among them, neither is the free market, an economy, a bill of rights, standing armies, a monopoly of police forces, an executive branch, a national park system, a civil service, foreign policy, or indeed any policy, religious belief, old-age pensions, stable families, public schools, modern sewage treatment, rockets to Mars, divine justice, natural law, or the salute to the flag. Such things may be desiderata from many points of view, to be debated and legislated upon in civil politics, but they are not defining features of civil association as such.

All the rule of law requires is a body of formal equals who understand the law as authoritative, recognize an obligation to comply with it, and subscribe to procedures for enacting, amending, and interpreting it.

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Moral restraint, not conceptual parsimony, prompts Oakeshott to apply Ockham's razor to the rule of law. Unlike other modes, the legal system is compulsory. Its subjects are human beings most of whom fall under it by accident of birth. They have an obligation to comply with disagreeable laws, even as they try to amend them. The law presumes to define their personhood, to lay down the conditions of its own authority, and to specify the procedures by which they may appeal to this authority. Any excess in the definition of what is essential to it, therefore, opens the door to unexamined abuse, or, worse, moral enormity.

Oakeshott's is the first philosophical definition successfully to relieve the rule of law from reliance on the category of purpose, to show that civil association has a different logic from that of everyday life. As individual human beings, Oakeshott tells us, we are full of projects, plans, policies, and purposes. Collectively, we may pursue these in a variety of institutions—in "enterprise association," as he calls it. But civil association is modally distinct from this: *cives* accept not a set of common aims but a commonly recognized system of rules. As with the English language, which facilitates each of our projects, grows with them, but cannot be adequately explained as an instrument for getting them done, civility has a purely procedural integrity independent of the purposes that this or that law may seem to serve at this or that time. Its conditions are not substantive but adverbial, enabling us to conduct ourselves "civilly" throughout our many enterprises.

> Civil associates may, at choice, enter into relationships of affection, of discourse, of gainful enterprise, or of playful engagement, but in respect of being civilly associated they cannot be either required or forbidden to do so; they are required only to subscribe to the conditions of *respublica*. . . . In short, the civil condition and a state understood in terms of civil association postulates self-determined autonomous human beings seeking the satisfaction of their wants in self-chosen transactions with others of their kind.

Civil association, then, requires a spirit of indirection that must be widely diffused. It presupposes human beings with purposes, plans, and projects of their own who recognize the law as not sharing these. It requires of them a non-managerial, non-anthropomorphic view of the state. For it follows from Oakeshott's modal categories that to the extent that the state is understood as a civil association, without human personality and without purposes, plans, and projects of its own, *cives* shall have unfettered conditions under which to choose their versions of human personality.

That civil association as an "ideal character" can exist only in compromised form does not diminish the force of this argument. On the contrary, it suggests a program of fine discrimination among the varieties

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of state action, and renewed attention to the ideal and literature of the *Rechtstaat*.

In the fifteen years that remained to him after the publication of *On Human Conduct*, Oakeshott stayed in England, spending more and more time in Dorset and finally giving up his London apartment altogether. He had a further book to finish, *On History and Other Essays*. It contains some of his most sure-handed and well-balanced philosophical writing. He had declared early that "philosophy has less place for what is second-class than any other field of intellectual endeavor," and this slim volume is a fitting endpaper to his youthful aspirations.

A piece entitled "The Rule of Law" puts into crisper form his definition of civil association and adds a discussion of justice ("the *jus* of *lex*"). As a lighter counterpoint, a midrashic retelling of "The Tower of Babel" turns the biblical tale into an anti-utopian allegory of enterprise association.

Three essays on historiography form the core of the collection. They take up the discussion of history as a mode that Oakeshott began in 1933. If R. G. Collingwood was correct in calling that earlier effort "the high water mark of English thought upon history," the essays published fifty years later must be the flood tide. They move with Oakeshott's usual elegance and economy to deflate the leading pretensions.

The central essay treats the category of relation appropriate in the writing of history. Oakeshott rejects "the fortuitous, the causal, the similar, the correlative, the analogous" in favor of "the contingent." He suggests that historians can explain events only in terms of antecedent events that "touch" them. By this he means that the antecedent events that the historian notices must make a significant difference in shaping the subsequent. The evidence is only nominally "the past." What historians really do is make certain kinds of inference from the present—from documents, artifacts, and other survivals that are available when they write. The inferential relations are designed not to support an argument but to show how one event is best explained in terms of others that bear upon it.

The Purbeck region of Dorset, rich in quarries, provides him with his most telling image: the dry wall, in which the stones are held together by their shapes without premeditated design. "It is what its components, in touching, constitute." There is no mortar for the historian—no laws of history, no necessity of events, no grand design, organic growth, divine purpose, national destiny, permanent essence, teleological unfolding. The historian has no set rules, only the exercise of judgment in relating human events to others in a continuous chain of contiguities. Locale may make a significant difference for one event but not for another, and the

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same holds for any other factor. The only constant in history is human conduct itself, always unpredictable, always open to intelligent choice.

The response to this book, as to *On Human Conduct*, spared him too hectic a retirement. The reprinting of *Experience and Its Modes* and the consequent demand upon him for two sentences on the dust jacket might be attributed to interest stirred by the essays on history. But otherwise, the world did not beat a path to his door. He sat for a portrait to be hung at his old Cambridge college, cooperated with the authors of two books and a thesis written on his work, attended a reunion of his World War II unit, "Phantom" (an intelligence group that made reports from the front), took an occasional trip to London, accepted a few honors, attended the odd conference, kept up with his correspondents, wrote letters of recommendation, made aphoristic entries in a notebook, dusted and reshelved his books, pottered about in the garden, and entertained a few house guests.

From time to time I was one of these. I last visited him the summer before his death. I was on my way home from a philosophy conference in Poland, a country where the late attempt to organize the state as an enterprise association will give many readers instant rapport with the translation of Oakeshott's work in preparation by the former underground publisher, Respublica Press. He came in his little blue MG to fetch me from the train station.

We arrived in time for tea, which was Christel's speciality. Michael did all of the heavier meals, she the lighter ones. During this stay Michael insisted on preparing all the dinners at home. He was an excellent short-order cook who made imaginative use of ready-made and local ingredients. His soups were tasty combinations of French and Swiss powdered varieties; his sauces likewise. He took care that the four main meals alternated beef, veal, chicken, and fish. The chicken, as I recall, was served with pasta and the Italian flag colors of pepper—green, yellow, and red. The dessert that night was strawberries with a cointreau-flavored vanilla ice cream made locally at Corfe Castle.

He was the most considerate host. This time, he had saved for me a clipping of a long review of the early works of C. S. Peirce. He knew that in pursuing the problem of modality I had become interested in Peirce's work, which I found rich in approaches lacking in his own. He also put in my hands Sarah Orne Jewett's *Country of the Pointed Firs*, a memoir of Maine that he joined Willa Cather in admiring. Its words about hospitality applied to Oakeshott as well:

> Her hospitality was something exquisite; she had the gift, which so many women lack, of being able to make themselves and their houses belong entirely to a guest's pleasure,—that charming surrender for the moment of themselves and

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whatever belongs to them, so that they make a part of one's own life that can never be forgotten. Tact is after all a kind of mind-reading, and my hostess had the golden gift. Sympathy is of the mind as well as the heart.

He showed me also a few recent things on his own work that I had not seen: a new Japanese translation of *Rationalism in Politics*, a Harvard Ph.D. thesis, a book of essays—*The Activity of Politics*—by a promising young scholar, and the clippings of four reviews of his collected essays on education.

We did a tour of the garden. He was wearing the yellow sweater he had worn in a photograph sent the previous fall of himself flanked by two towering sunflowers. He had planted many more sunflowers this year. The laburnum had been blown over and needed to be restaked and tied down. We did this together. He showed me the improvements he had made in the shed since my last stay.

The rest of the visit was spent walking, talking, reading, and viewing Christel's drawings and paintings. Michael was alert to European affairs. How long would it take the Poles to free themselves economically of the Russians? What was Budapest like these days? And what about the coming reunification of Germany? He had misgivings about locating the new capital in Berlin. His abiding interest, however, was people. He kept track of many friends and their children, and of his two grandsons as well. He was especially interested in those who had ventured off the beaten paths. Through his memories, I had been introduced to a gallery of adventurous characters, a few of whom I met for the first time at his funeral, more of whom were either dead or in faraway places. I had heard most about his teachers, whose idiosyncrasies he dwelled upon with affection.

In years past, he had joined me on long walks along the seacoast. On this visit he accompanied me only to the first stile and dry wall at the edge of Acton. At night he apologized in advance that he might be up with a catarrh. He had tried all sorts of patent medicines for it and had even given up smoking. When I mentioned that my grandfather had had the same problem and had given up cigarettes at ninety-three, Michael grew wide-eyed. Ninety-three! What an age! Christel reminded him that he was not so far from that age himself.

One morning he excused himself to go into Swanage for a medical checkup. It was only after his death that I learned, as did Christel, that these were weekly trips for cancer treatments.

A letter from him six weeks later was written in a slightly scrawled deviation from his usual precise script. He confessed to being in pain. His wife noticed something unusual when for two days in mid-December he failed to rise early to make the fire. He died in his bed around midnight on December 18/19, just a week after his eighty-ninth birthday.

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In rereading some of his writings after his death, I noticed that I had marked an aside in an essay on history that poses further questions about his view of modality. He says that the "universe of practical discourse" may be seen "in terms of moral (that is, non-instrumental) considerations and compunctions but not in the poetic terms of affection, friendship, and love which belong to another world."

Elsewhere he identifies the poetic mode as a world of images contemplated for the sheer delight of them. Placing "affection, friendship, and love" in this modality suggests that the line between fact and fiction is irrelevant in such matters. I had meant to ask him about that.

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Schumpeter Ascending

THOMAS K. McCRAW

A SCHUMPETER BOOM HAS BEEN UNDERWAY for about a decade now, animated by several different trends. One is the relative rise of the German and Japanese economies and the corresponding decline of the British and American, all of which are hard to explain using only Keynesian and neoclassical methods of analysis. Another is a re-emerging intellectual interest in each of the three mainstays of the Schumpeterian system: entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic development. Whether or not the Age of Keynes is in fact giving way to the Age of Schumpeter, as a German scholar has argued in the *American Economic Review*, Schumpeter's life and work are ripe for re-examination. His life alone is the stuff of melodrama. As Paul Samuelson, the best of his many famous pupils, once put it, Schumpeter was a great scholar and personality, but "his comparative advantage was if anything almost greater as a personality."

He was born in 1883, the same year as Keynes. It was also the year in which Karl Marx died. His birthplace was Triesch, Moravia (now part of Czechoslovakia), where his bourgeois Catholic family had long been involved in the textile business. Joseph ("Jozsi," as he was called) was an only child. When he was four, his father died. When he was ten, his thirty-two-year-old mother, whom he adored, married a man twice her own age, a retired lieutenant general in the Austro-Hungarian army. The new family then moved to Vienna, where Jozsi's mother became a dedicated social climber, mixing with the aristocratic society of this glittering capital of the dual monarchy.

Between the ages of ten and eighteen, Jozsi attended the Theresianum, a well-known preparatory school for high-born Austrian boys. Without his aged stepfather's connections, he could never have qualified for this school. Clearly, his mother's second marriage had been undertaken with just this kind of opportunity in mind. As Schumpeter's Harvard colleague Gottfried Haberler later remarked, Jozsi acquired at

✪ THOMAS K. McCRAW is the Straus Professor of Business History at Harvard University. He is the author of several books, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Prophets of Regulation*, and editor of several others, including *America Versus Japan* and *The Essential Alfred Chandler: Essays Toward a Historical Theory of Big Business*.

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the Theresianum his lifelong aristocratic bearing, his "sometimes quaintly overpolite old-world manner." Afterward, he went on to take his law degree at the University of Vienna, graduating in 1906.

His real interest was not law but economics, which was then taught by the law faculty according to the custom of Continental Europe. At that time, Vienna was the best place in the world to study economics, as Cambridge, England, would become in the 1920s, Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the 1940s, and perhaps Chicago in the 1960s. Schumpeter's teachers included Friedrich von Wieser and Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk. He had as seminar mates Ludwig von Mises as well as several bright young Marxists such as Rudolf Hilferding and Emil Lederer. The Marxian view of capitalism as a dynamic process profoundly influenced not only these young men but also Schumpeter himself.

In other fields of intellect besides economics, fin de siècle Vienna provided an exciting ambience. Psychoanalysis was being developed by Sigmund Freud. In art, the contours of Modernism were being shaped by the painting of Gustav Klimt, the architecture of Otto Wagner, the music of Arnold Schoenberg. So Schumpeter could hardly have grown up in a more stimulating milieu.

After graduation he spent a summer term in Berlin and then a longer period at the London School of Economics as a research student. He had a glorious time in England, visiting Oxford and Cambridge, taking in concerts and plays, weekending at country houses. As many of Schumpeter's friends later remarked, the combination of his bourgeois birth and aristocratic boyhood created serious tensions, but all were resolved in favor of upper-class values. "He adopted," said his student and Harvard colleague Arthur Smithies, "the manners, the habits, and the tastes of an aristocrat."

In 1907, at the age of twenty-four, Schumpeter married the very attractive young daughter of an official in the Church of England. Soon the two went off to Egypt, where Schumpeter managed the financial affairs of an Egyptian princess, kept a stable of horses, and practiced law. He also completed and brought out his first book, a long treatise on economic theory. This was in 1908, when he was only twenty-five years of age.

The book, entitled *Das Wesen und der Hauptinhalt der theoretischen Nationalökonomie* (The nature and substance of theoretical economics), has never been translated into English, although, significantly, a Japanese edition appeared in 1936. Schumpeter's purpose in writing it was to introduce a more rigorous theoretical framework into German economics. At the time, in the aftermath of the notorious *Methodenstreit* led by the historicist Gustav Schmoller on one side and the theorist Carl Menger on the other, German scholarship remained relatively hostile to

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theory. Schumpeter's admiration of the highly theoretical system of Léon Walras, the French-born mathematical economist who pioneered marginal analysis and led the Lausanne School, is evident throughout the book. To the end of his life he regarded Walras as the greatest of all economists.

Schumpeter also foreshadowed in *Das Wesen* another lifelong prejudice: a disinclination to apply theory prematurely to economic policy-making. At the same time, he accepted neoclassical tools and hypotheses, such as static analysis, perfect competition, and the constant tendency toward equilibrium. These basic tenets of the neoclassical system, set forth by Walras and others, would not all survive intact in Schumpeter's future writings.

In 1909, he left Egypt and returned to Austria. The publication of *Das Wesen* had won him immediate recognition as an economist of outstanding promise, and he was appointed professor at the University of Czernowitz, located in the easternmost part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. According to Schumpeter's own accounts, this city, now a part of the Soviet Union, was extremely "eastern" and exotic. In later years he liked to regale friends with the lessons in advanced sensuality he enjoyed during his time there. (In much the fashion of Benjamin Franklin, Schumpeter sought the company of beautiful women throughout his life.) He was fond of saying that he had aspired to become the greatest economist, lover, and horseman in Austria, or, as he sometimes put it, the world. Then came the punch line: things hadn't worked out well with the horses.

In 1911, through the influence of his mentor Böhm-Bawerk, he moved to a better school, the University of Graz. He remained there for nearly a decade, even though he still hated being away from Vienna and took frequent trips to the capital. Yet at Graz he proved to be an extraordinarily facile and prolific scholar. In 1912, he published *Theorie der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung (The Theory of Economic Development)*, a path-breaking book that linked the name Schumpeter permanently with the idea of entrepreneurship.

In the hypothetical system he describes in this book, which begins with a "circular flow" analogous to the static system of Walras and other neoclassicists, economic routine is periodically interrupted by bursts of entrepreneurial energy. These bursts come in clusters. Together they disrupt equilibrium, and this dynamic process, says Schumpeter, is the basis of economic development. More than that, it embodies the essence of capitalism. Here, as in his later work, Schumpeter is primarily concerned with the phenomenon of economic evolution. Most economists, then and to this day, have contented themselves with the study of static systems of exchange governed by "laws" of supply and demand.

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Schumpeter, on the other hand, as he himself later put it in a rare autobiographical letter, "began at an early age to look upon economic life essentially as a process of change, and I tried to make the main features of this change the center of my own type of theory." Hence his preoccupation with entrepreneurship. Hence also his careful specification of broad categories of development: the opening of a new market, the conquest of a new source of supply, the reorganization of an industry, the introduction of a new good or new way of production.

Schumpeter always assigned a vital role to entrepreneurship, a factor of production that he thought had never been well understood. John Stuart Mill and Alfred Marshall had written about it, and others used the term as well, although no good English equivalent to the French word has appeared even to this day. Marshall's equating of entrepreneurship with "management" seemed sensible enough, but in fact it missed the essence of the entrepreneurial function. In trying to communicate the true role of entrepreneurship, Schumpeter shows in *The Theory of Economic Development* early signs of becoming, as he did, one of the great aphorists in the history of economic thought: "The upper strata of [a capitalist] society are like hotels which are indeed always full of people, but people who are forever changing." Also, "Carrying out a new plan and acting according to a customary one are things as different as making a road and walking along it." As this second quotation implies, Schumpeter saw tremendous obstacles to successful innovation. Vested interests would fight it at every turn, and so the energy required of entrepreneurs must be all the greater.

The last element in *The Theory of Economic Development* is "the swarm-like appearance of entrepreneurs." A concentration of innovative behavior in certain periods of time constitutes the underlying cause of the business cycle under capitalism. In making such an argument, Schumpeter related entrepreneurship to the most difficult analytical problem of capitalist economies: the "jerky disturbance" of equilibrium—not any gentle ebb and flow, but rather something of an altogether "different order of magnitude." Overall, *The Theory of Economic Development* is a tour de force of imaginative synthesis. It represented the earliest expression of a coherent system of ideas that made Schumpeter famous throughout the world. Coming from a man only twenty-eight years of age, it was a remarkable performance.

Two years later, he brought out yet another book, this one a concise, penetrating analysis of the history of economic thought. Thus, barely out of his twenties, he had produced two major theoretical treatises and an intellectual history of his discipline, in addition to a score of important articles. Although he was never offered a professorship at the University of Vienna, probably because of his arrogant and mercurial temperament,

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it was now clear that Schumpeter was the most promising Continental economist of his generation. In 1913, he made his first trip to the United States as an exchange professor at Columbia, which recognized his achievements with the award of an honorary degree. At the time he was still only thirty. But he was about to experience a prolonged interruption in his focused routine as a scholar.

When the Great War began in August 1914, Schumpeter's wife was visiting England, and she did not return to Austria. The marriage had failed long before this time, but it was not actually dissolved until the 1920s. Schumpeter, a lifelong pacifist, made no secret during the war of his pro-British sympathies, even though he remained ambitious to make a name and place for himself in Austria. He now became more and more deeply involved in national politics. He talked of severing Austria's alliance with Germany and making a separate peace with the Allies. For a reconstituted Austro-Hungarian Empire, he urged leadership by the aristocracy, a monarch with strong powers over parliament, and limited liberties for the press. (Years later, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., accurately described Schumpeter as "a reactionary without illusions.") He also showed signs of political opportunism.

In 1919 he was appointed finance minister in the new coalition government of Austria, under the sponsorship of socialist friends from his university years. He was not a success. Given the irresistible pressures of currency inflation, the finance ministry proved an impossible portfolio, and after seven months he was forced out of office.

With his political ambitions scotched, Schumpeter now became president of a private bank in Vienna. After five years, he again had to confess failure. Worse, he was now insolvent, and for the next decade he had to put aside part of his earnings toward the repayment of debts. Yet even at this low point in his life he still had the priceless asset of his worldwide reputation as an economist. When in 1925 he decided to return to academia, he first accepted an offer to be a guest professor in Japan. But soon an invitation came from the University of Bonn, and he accepted that instead. As his friend Haberler recalled, Schumpeter "never forgot" that a Japanese and a German university had afforded him this chance. "His sentimental attachment to both countries and his sharp reaction to chauvinistic wholesale condemnation of the German and Japanese peoples and their culture during the Second World War had one of its roots in that experience." In 1931, he spent several months lecturing in Japan, and he later wrote of the "bonds which unite me to Japan and especially to Japanese economists." He had gone to Harvard as a visiting professor in 1927; he returned for a second visit in 1931, and accepted the offer of a permanent position there in 1932. He was then forty-nine years of age. He remained at Harvard until his death eighteen years later, in 1950.

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In 1925, when he was forty-two, Schumpeter had married Annie Reisinger, a beautiful twenty-two-year-old woman whom he had met when she was a girl. Tragically, Annie died in childbirth only a year later, and the child died as well. In this same year, Schumpeter's mother also died, and he never fully recovered from the triple emotional shock. For the rest of his life he was troubled by bouts of melancholy, sometimes to the point of clinical depression. Yet he continued to play the outward role of Continental bon vivant. It was a measure of his loss that after winding up his and his dead mother's affairs he never again set foot in Austria. After leaving Germany for Harvard, he never revisited that country, though he summered annually in Europe for three more years. After 1935, he never returned to Europe at all.

In his early years at Harvard, Schumpeter lived in a large Cambridge house with the aged widower Frank Taussig, a distinguished economist whom he deeply admired. In 1937, Schumpeter married Elizabeth Boody, herself an economist, a well-to-do New Englander, and the divorced wife of a leftist book dealer. Her wealth, devotion, social connections, and comfortable houses in Cambridge and the Berkshires brought to Schumpeter's life a warmth and stability he had not known since his Vienna boyhood.

Although thrice married himself, Schumpeter counseled his young associates against marriage, often in very strong terms. "I want to apologise for [Wassily] Leontief," Schumpeter wrote Keynes in 1933 about a manuscript the future Nobel laureate had submitted to the journal Keynes edited. "He has indeed produced what I consider a most original and interesting piece of work but then instead of finishing the article he got married in spite of my disapproval of this step." Domesticity tended to douse the fires of inspiration, Schumpeter believed, especially during one's "sacred third decade." Perhaps thinking of his own precocity, Schumpeter always believed that one's best epiphanies come between the ages of twenty and thirty.

As a teacher and a personality, Schumpeter cut a striking figure in Harvard Yard. John Kenneth Galbraith, who arrived in Cambridge at about the same time, remembered him as "a slightly swarthy man of solid frame and a little less than average height. He had an amused and expressive face and an unremitting love for company and conversation. . . . Given the choice between being right and being memorable, Schumpeter never hesitated." He talked constantly, with anyone and everyone. He was forever jotting down thoughts on tiny scraps of paper and stuffing them into his pockets in no apparent order. As his surviving (and chaotic) personal papers show, he cut up incoming letters into small squares to feed his insatiable requirements for more scraps of paper. His student Samuelson recalled him as "a great showman" who spoke

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without notes to large audiences in an unforgettable Viennese accent. "Clothes were an important part of the show," Samuelson recalled, and Schumpeter required at least an hour to dress himself each morning. The young Mrs. Samuelson, according to her husband, kept careful track of the "cyclic reappearance of the seemingly infinite number of combinations in his wardrobe: the cycle was not simple, and it was far from random."

As a teacher Schumpeter was profligate with his time. He lavished attention mainly on his many Ph.D. students, but spent time also with hundreds of undergraduates, some of whom inevitably were dullards. He gave A's to far too many students, encouraging them beyond their capabilities. He heaped even more attention on the work of colleagues, spending endless hours talking about projects and marking up drafts. Yet he asked no one to reciprocate. His own work remained private until he was ready to publish.

Within the economics department and the university, Schumpeter was never as influential as one might expect, given his worldwide reputation. He was less popular with his own age cohort than with students and young colleagues, perhaps because he was too fond of being the center of attention and of expressing unconventional views. "These pronouncements," one of his young colleagues (Seymour Harris) recalled, "reflected a peculiar trait in Schumpeter: his unwillingness to stand with the majority, whether it be on matters of foreign policy or an appraisal of the merits of a dry martini." Sometimes his perverseness became a serious problem. During the early 1940s, Schumpeter openly denounced what he regarded as the anti-German (as opposed to anti-Nazi) hysteria then abroad in America. He thereby alienated a few of his close friends, some of whom believed that he harbored feelings of anti-Semitism. If he did, they were never much in evidence. During the 1930s, while he was rooming with Taussig, who was himself of Jewish descent, he assisted displaced European scholars, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, in securing jobs in America.

Intellectually, on matters of economics, Schumpeter remained open-minded almost to a fault. He saw something useful in nearly all approaches, and in turn was respected by economists across the doctrinal spectrum. One of his warmest admirers was Paul Sweezy, a young Marxist who assisted him in the graduate course on theory. Like many economists, Sweezy found it amazing that in all of Schumpeter's courses he omitted any reference to his own distinguished body of work. Instead, he played the devil's advocate. He had, wrote Sweezy, that "rarest of all qualities in a teacher—he never showed the slightest inclination to judge students or colleagues by the extent to which they agreed with him. Keynesians (regularly in a substantial majority after 1936) and Marxists

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(often in a minority of one as long as I was in Cambridge) were equally welcome in his circle. He didn't care what we thought as long as we did think."

Methodologically eclectic, Schumpeter nevertheless insisted on three cardinal principles. He regarded economics as a "science" more akin to physics than to the run of social sciences. He held as an article of faith that all good economics must include theory, history, and statistics. And he relentlessly evangelized in favor of econometrics. His own earliest publications took a mathematical approach, and he later helped to organize the Econometric Society and served as its president. Yet, typical of the contradictions within his character, he himself was not a first-rate mathematician like his friend Ragnar Frisch or his pupil Samuelson.

Though outwardly a blithe spirit, Schumpeter in fact was an obsessive worker. He spent evenings, nights, weekends, and vacations reading and writing. He held himself to impossibly high standards, and his self-discipline became almost superhuman. In his diary he graded himself: zero for a bad day, one if he had been unusually productive, and something in between for routine performances. He earned few ones. A similar system was employed for longer units of time: weeks, months, years.

With all of his manifest brilliance and his pose of unremitting gaiety, Schumpeter remained a deeply wounded man—a refugee adrift in an inhospitable world, a man without a country. The culture of the dual monarchy and the comfortable stimulation of fin de siècle Vienna were now as distant as classical Greece. Edwardian England, where he had also felt at home, was equally remote, part of the dead past. With the disappearance of the world of his youth, he was now "completely qualified," as Samuelson put it, "to play the important sociological role of the alienated stranger."

Among Schumpeter's surviving manuscripts is the fragment of a novel he worked on from time to time. The novel's protagonist is a person of mixed social background whose father dies when he is four, leaving him with a strong mother who is ambitious to make him a gentleman. As he matures, it becomes evident that he is possessed of superlative gifts, yet is deprived by circumstance of a true home. Eventually, as an adult, he finds redemption, or at least consolation, in his work:

> And for modern man his work is everything—all that is left. . . . Doing efficient work without aim, without hope. . . .
>
> No family.
>
> No real friends.
>
> No woman in whose womanhood to anchor.

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II

Few scholars have ever worked as productively as Schumpeter over so long a time. His first published article appeared in 1905, his last in 1950. His total output comprises 260 items, including fifteen books, two of which exceed one thousand pages. Not many economists, if any, have attracted more interest from scholars in other disciplines. Critical evaluations of his work first appeared in 1907 and have continued in a steady stream. In recent years, a flood of studies about him and his work has been published. By 1990, when a thorough bibliography appeared, the list contained about two thousand items devoted partly or entirely to his work. (In 1991, just after this essay was completed, there appeared two more books of unusual importance: *Opening Doors*, a remarkably perceptive two-volume biography by Robert Loring Allen, from Transaction Publishers; and *Joseph A. Schumpeter: The Economics and Sociology of Capitalism*, a collection of Schumpeter's articles with a long biographical introduction by Richard A. Swedberg, published by Princeton University Press.)

Schumpeter was a brilliant, multilingual speaker, comfortable in all major European languages except Russian. Samuelson once estimated that he had addressed a larger number of professional scholars in more countries and on more occasions than had any other economist in history. In 1948 Schumpeter was elected president of the American Economic Association, the first foreign-born scholar to hold that office. In 1949 he was chosen president of the International Economic Association, the highest honor then open to an economist.

Given his acknowledged greatness, it is striking not how extensive Schumpeter's influence on other economists has been, but how limited. There is no Schumpeterian school. His system is so broad and inclusive, so imbued with historical and sociological meditations, that, in economic jargon, it is "difficult to operationalize." Unlike Keynes, Schumpeter seldom addressed public policy issues. He made it a point of honor never to advance a program of economic reform. He insisted that such activity by economists was secondary to purely "scientific" work and likely to damage it. Here he was especially hard on English economists. Often he referred to the "Ricardian Vice" of abstracting complex matters into simple formulae and then leaping into policy debates, brandishing the abstract model as a universal prescription for action. He found Ricardo and Keynes guiltiest of such "sins," Adam Smith and Alfred Marshall a little less so.

His friend Haberler once wrote that no Schumpeterian school of thought developed precisely because Schumpeter's attraction to economics was purely intellectual. He was never a reformer in the mold of

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Marx, Mill, or Keynes. It took strong partisanship and constant argumentation to sustain a school, and Schumpeter shrank from both. When he left the University of Bonn in 1932 to come to Harvard, he said in a farewell address, "I have never tried to bring about a Schumpeter School. There is none and it ought not to exist. . . . Economics is not a philosophy but a science. Hence there should be no 'schools' in our field." Shortly after Schumpeter's death, Samuelson wrote in a eulogy that "he did leave behind him the only kind of school appropriate to a scientific discipline—a generation of economic theorists who caught fire from his teaching."

One final reason for the absence of a school of followers pertains to Schumpeter's unbridled style of presentation. Though a first-class phrasemaker, he was capable of composing sentences containing hundreds of words. His mind was so fertile that one thought led pell-mell to another, sometimes without the intervening discipline of conventional syntax. Here his curious reluctance to submit drafts for critical pruning cost him dearly. Today, in an age of minimalism, reading him is like listening to the music of Richard Wagner. As Virgil Thomson once said, Wagner could not "criticize his own work with the objectivity that the quality of genius in it demanded. As a result, every score is a sea beach full of jewelry and jetsam." The same is true of Schumpeter. Between gems of brilliant writing come extended flights of digression.

His immensely long *Business Cycles: A Theoretical, Historical, and Statistical Analysis of the Capitalist Process* (1939) is a case in point. This book, which he worked on throughout the thirties, contains a staggering amount of data and interpretation. Intended as a magnum opus, it went far beyond the subject of its title to engage the huge agenda implied in its subtitle. In the end, it became a curious mixture of wisdom and folly.

The folly has to do with Schumpeter's attempt to fit the facts of economic history into pseudo-scientific wave theories developed by other scholars: "six Juglars [ten-year cycles] to a Kondratieff [sixty-year cycles] and three Kitchins [forty-month cycles] to a Juglar." Why such patterns would appear, he admits, is "difficult to see." Indeed it is. As a historical proposition it approaches nonsense, partaking, as Samuelson unkindly remarked, of "Pythagorean moonshine."

The wisdom in *Business Cycles* comes in Schumpeter's discussion of innovation as the core of the capitalist process. He goes so far as to *define* capitalism as a system in which innovation is the engine of all movement, all growth: "Without innovations, no entrepreneurs; without entrepreneurial achievement, no capitalist returns and no capitalist propulsion." The barriers to innovation, he makes clear, were often

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psychological. "It was not enough to produce satisfactory soap, it was also necessary to induce people to wash." He goes on to say that the spread of innovation, and its clustering in some industries and in some periods of time, determines the behavior of the business cycle. This is a bottom-up, microeconomic interpretation of the cycle, as opposed to the Keynesian top-down analysis, which accords transcendent importance to money and other macroeconomic forces. Whereas Keynes emphasized monetary and fiscal policies, Schumpeter focused on leading industrial sectors: textiles in the eighteenth century, railroads in the nineteenth, electricity in the twentieth. Here the reader is treated to some uncommonly fine examples of the Schumpeterian way with words:

> Stabilized capitalism is a contradiction in terms.
>
> History is a record of "effects" the vast majority of which nobody intended to produce.
>
> Cycles are not, like tonsils, separable things that might be treated by themselves, but are, like the beat of the heart, of the essence of the organism that displays them.
>
> Entrepreneurs were not necessarily strangled [the inventor of a loom for weaving ribbon having been strangled by order of the Danzig municipal authority in 1579] but they were not infrequently in danger of their lives.

Schumpeter took great pains to show that from the medieval period to the present time, innovation has remained difficult for incumbent producers to accept. This has been true for not only technological but also organizational innovations, such as the rise of giant corporations. He saw real dangers in the antagonism of Americans toward big business, especially because it seemed rooted in their historic antipathy toward monopoly. Thus it was hatred based on false analogy, traceable to colonial times and opposition to royal absolutism and prerogative.

Writing in the thirties, Schumpeter lamented the rise of the New Deal and what it implied for the survival of capitalism. In his view, the American government was simply unable to cope, given the separation of powers, the absence of a real civil service, and the public's antistatism. He contrasted the American system unfavorably with that of Britain, whose constitutional monarchy and career civil service he especially admired. In Depression America, Schumpeter complained:

> The tact, the reserve, the *savoir-faire* which are second nature to a seasoned bureaucracy were alike absent. Enthusiastic individuals and groups developed their own policies and tried to push them with Congress and the public, scornfully refusing counsels of self-denial and patience.

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Here we see not only prophetic insights, but personal alienation as well. As a cultured legatee of the dual monarchy, Schumpeter felt marooned in the midst of the New Dealers' ignorance and arrogance. Yet he also deplored the intellectual flabbiness of his fellow conservatives: "When I see those who espouse my cause, I begin to wonder about the validity of my position."

In 1939, reviewers found it difficult to cope with *Business Cycles*, or even to characterize it. Two critics did notice an implicit distaste for macroeconomic theorizing, referring to Schumpeter's "rather despised 'aggregative theories,' " and his "vigorous stand against 'the curse of aggregative thinking.' " Today, with our own retrospective of half a century, it is apparent that precisely here lies the difference between Keynesian and Schumpeterian ways of looking at things, both for economic analysis and the workings of public policy. It is a profound difference and a hint for our own time of why some scholars believe the Age of Schumpeter may now be displacing the Age of Keynes as a means of understanding contemporary reality.

Yet Schumpeter was never in the same league with Keynes as a political strategist. While Keynes ardently wanted to shape public policy, Schumpeter remained fastidiously above the fray. Perhaps it was all for the best. As an advocate, Schumpeter was completely undisciplined. Compared with Keynes's *General Theory* (1936), which, as Schumpeter himself noted, concedes nothing to the opposition and contains nothing not directly supportive of its argument, Schumpeter's *Business Cycles* is a mishmash. At three times the length of Keynes's book, it manages to say perhaps a fourth as much. It never addresses the issue of employment or of national economies as aggregates, which were the two breakthroughs of the Keynesian analysis. As a magnum opus, it was a tragic failure.

Three years after *Business Cycles*, Schumpeter made a spectacular recovery with *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. The best known of all his works, it has been translated into fifteen languages, has gone through numerous reprintings, and still sells well. Although Schumpeter liked to disparage it as a mere potboiler in comparison with his earlier books, it is in fact one of the best analyses of capitalism ever written, and perhaps *the* best. As the Cambridge economist Joan Robinson wrote in her review, Schumpeter's argument "blows like a gale through the dreary pedantry of static analysis." Whether or not the reader was totally convinced, "this book is worth the whole parrot-house of contemporary orthodoxies, right, left, or centre." Today, two generations after its appearance, it retains its seminal quality.

The detached, ironic, pessimistic tone of the book seems to owe

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something to the harsh reception of *Business Cycles* three years before. It is as if the author, disillusioned by the failure of his huge effort to explain business cycles, decided to say exactly what he thought on a wide range of subjects, of which economics was only one. Hence the unusual breadth and reach of the book, reflected in its sales and also in citations by scholars from many disciplines.

Besides its superb chapters on Marx, the book's analysis of competition makes it especially useful in understanding the economic world of our own time. Schumpeter begins by contrasting the theoretical universe of the classical economists, beginning with Adam Smith, with the reality of modern industrial enterprise. He turns his searchlight on neoclassical hypotheses about monopoly and perfect competition, and he finds both deficient as dominant analytical tools for the study of market behavior.

In economic theory, "perfect competition" is an abstract state of affairs in which infinite numbers of buyers and sellers confront each other in a stable marketplace. Each has perfect information, all transactions are costless and frictionless, and all decisions are completely rational. Schumpeter recognized that this perfect competition model remained essential for some theoretical exercises, but he contrasted it with actual conditions in modern business. Much of industry was in fact characterized by constantly evolving oligopoly and, for purposes of theory, was not nearly as amenable to precise mathematical modeling as were situations of pure monopoly and perfect competition. With oligopoly, "there is in fact no determinate equilibrium at all and the possibility presents itself that there may be an endless sequence of moves and countermoves, an indefinite state of warfare between firms."

The industrial structure we see before us is the climax of an "organizational development," the capstone of a series of long evolutionary steps from crafts to factories to oligopolies. Fundamentally, it is a "process of industrial mutation—if I may use that biological term—that incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one."

Here Schumpeter introduces his oxymoronic metaphor of "creative destruction"—the sweeping out of old products, old enterprises, and old organizational forms by new ones. It is one of the most memorable images in all of economics, perhaps second only to Adam Smith's "invisible hand." He could hardly have been more emphatic about its importance: "This process of Creative Destruction is the essential fact about capitalism. It is what capitalism consists in and what every capitalist concern has got to live in."

Analytically, this implies that a proper economic evaluation of capitalism must contain a large dose of history. It must proceed longitudinally, with an extended time frame:

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> Every piece of business strategy [a term now commonplace in corporate circles but invented here by Schumpeter] acquires its true significance only against the background of that process and within the situation created by it. It must be seen in its role in the perennial gale of creative destruction; it cannot be understood irrespective of it or, in fact, on the hypothesis that there is a perennial lull. . . . The usual theorist's paper and the usual government commission's report practically never try to see that behavior, on the one hand, as a result of a piece of past history and, on the other hand, as an attempt to deal with a situation that is sure to change presently—as an attempt by those firms to keep on their feet, on ground that is slipping away from under them. In other words, the problem that is usually being visualized is how capitalism administers existing structures, whereas the relevant problem is how it creates and destroys them. As long as this is not recognized, the investigator does a meaningless job.

Another implication of thinking historically, Schumpeter adds, is greater analytical emphasis on marketing and product quality. In turn, the traditional theorist's obsession with price should diminish: "In capitalist reality as distinguished from its textbook picture, it is not [price] competition which counts but the competition from the new commodity, the new technology, the new source of supply, the new type of organization (the largest-scale unit of control for instance)."

Schumpeter argues that the very nature of giant, capital-intensive enterprise requires strategic behavior not contemplated by orthodox economic theory except to the extent that the theory holds such behavior to be monopolistic. The practical problem arises when American public policy becomes directed against big business per se. "Rational as distinguished from vindictive regulation by public authority turns out to be an extremely delicate problem which not every government agency, particularly when in full cry against big business, can be trusted to solve." Doubts about the competence of regulators "crowd upon us particularly when we see the legal mind at work." As a matter of historical record, long-standing cases of monopoly, or even of price rigidities, are almost unknown. Yet, "economists, government agents, journalists and politicians in this country obviously love the word [monopoly] because it has come to be a term of opprobrium which is sure to rouse the public's hostility against any interest so labeled."

For Schumpeter, this was an ominous misconception. To him it seemed plain that big business, far from exploiting the common man, had raised the general standard of living to unprecedented levels. Organizational innovation, not monopoly status, was responsible for the great success of industrial giants. They should be prized, not denounced. Above all, they should be understood for what they are and how they evolved. Although some monopoly gains to individuals might accompany this evolutionary process, the advantage is temporary. Under capitalism, the idea of a permanent monopoly is laughable, especially in

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manufacturing. Whatever fleeting gains accrue are best understood as "entrepreneurial profits which are the prizes offered by capitalist society to the successful innovator." Conversely, the economic sectors closest in fact to the theoretical model of perfect competition would perform more efficiently "if controlled, each of them, by a dozen good brains."

Somewhat rashly, Schumpeter credited capitalism with all gains made during the industrial revolution. Stretching his argument to the limit, he rejected any distinction between capitalist enterprise and technological progress. Instead, the two "were essentially one and the same thing," in the sense that "the former was the propelling force of the latter."

Even so, Schumpeter argues, capitalism contains the seeds of its own destruction, not for economic but for sociological reasons. Capitalism is so materially productive that it creates and supports a class of intellectuals who reject the bourgeois values essential to the operation of the economic system. (Here, in this book published in 1942, and also in an essay written fifteen years before that, was Schumpeter's flat prediction of the rise of what later came to be called the New Class.) Productive though capitalism is, it doesn't inspire much idealism. "The stock exchange is a poor substitute for the Holy Grail." Similarly, those who excel at making money usually lack charismatic appeal. "A genius in the business office may be, and often is, utterly unable outside of it to say boo to a goose—both in the drawing room and on the platform." Overall, while the philosophical case for capitalism is strong, it is inordinately subtle. It lies beyond the intellectual capacity of the majority of observers, including most economists. "Why, practically every nonsense that has ever been said about capitalism has been championed by some professed economist." Most important, the case for capitalism "must rest on long-run considerations." In the short run, it is impossible for most people, even intellectuals, to put "[excess] profits and inefficiencies" out of their minds and focus instead on long-range trends.

Reading Schumpeter on capitalism is a lot like reading George Kennan on foreign policy. Like Kennan's argument, Schumpeter's is a cry from the heart of a sensitive elitist who has observed at firsthand one twentieth-century catastrophe after another; and who has just witnessed in America—the best hope of a capitalist commonwealth—what seem to his aristocratic eyes to be the incipient death throes of civilized society.

For Schumpeter, the tragedy of contemporary America had not come sooner because, in the nineteenth century, "the scheme of values that arose from the national task of developing the economic possibilities of the country drew nearly all the brains into business and impressed the businessman's attitudes upon the soul of the nation." Now, in 1942, after more than a decade of economic depression, a sea change had occurred,

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accompanied by radical new political departures. The New Deal, in Schumpeter's view, was hostile to (and worse, ignorant of) the motivating ethos of capitalism. He made no secret of his feeling that any soak-the-rich scheme, however justified in the short run by sins of the rich and needs of the poor, must in the end destroy those very bourgeois values undergirding the entire capitalist structure.

Given that Schumpeter was writing in the late 1930s and early 1940s, as World War II and the rise of powerful socialist and fascist states dominated intellectual discourse, it is little wonder that he would give vent to his inherent pessimism. He now foresaw not only the decline of capitalism, but also the eventual triumph of socialism, which he detested. He believed socialism might work because, unlike capitalism, it inspires people to noble ends, to something larger than themselves. In this it resembles the pre-secular world of the Middle Ages. "Socialism aims at higher goals than full bellies, exactly as Christianity means more than the somewhat hedonistic values of heaven and hell." Socialism implies "a new cultural world," one worth the sacrifice of some economic efficiency. For the truly committed, "socialist bread may well taste sweeter to them than capitalist bread simply because it is socialist bread, and it would do so even if they found mice in it."

Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy was not Schumpeter's last book. During the 1940s he labored over an immense treatise on the history of economic thought from Plato to the present. For this task he closeted himself in the Kress Library, the rare book room at the Harvard Business School that contains the world's finest collection of pre-1850 writings on economics. Here in this "scholar's Paradise" (as he and his wife called it), far from the excitement of World War II, deliberately insulated from the political and policy disputes that drew so many of his colleagues to wartime Washington, he plowed through a huge corpus of economic writings, analyzing each in its turn.

At the time of his death in 1950, the book remained unfinished. Its fugitive pieces lay scattered, partly in typescript, partly in his own handwriting. His wife undertook the labor of assembling the manuscript from scores of separate pieces that she found in her husband's Harvard office, their Cambridge home, and their summer house in Taconic, Connecticut. The resulting text, published in 1954 under the title *History of Economic Analysis*, is so monumental that it invites comparison with Dr. Johnson's *Dictionary* as a work of vast scholarship that came from a single intellect. The 1,260-page text is closely printed and runs to nearly one million words. Some fifteen hundred writers are discussed.

At the start of the book, Schumpeter insists, as he did on other occasions, that the proper study of economics requires three elements:

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theory, statistics, and history. Here, in his last testament, he expresses a preference for the third. "If, starting my work in economics afresh, I were told that I could study only one of the three but could have my choice, it would be economic history." He also makes a special point, as he had done forty years earlier in his first book, to warn against premature policy applications. He complains that economists from Adam Smith onward have "indulged their strong propensity to dabble in politics, to peddle political recipes, to offer themselves as philosophers of economic life," without always acknowledging or even being aware of their own value judgments.

Economists' habitual argument in favor of free trade, for example, expresses much more than an autonomous economic principle. It carries with it a whole congeries of other doctrines and policies without which it makes no sense either as an ideology or a freestanding element of statecraft. It implies anti-colonialism, national self-determination, consumer sovereignty, and political individualism.

Although free trade was the economic signature of Victorian England, Schumpeter was struck at how the great English economists of that period exhibited a "complete lack of imagination" in their overall vision. "Those writers lived at the threshold of the most spectacular economic developments ever witnessed. Vast possibilities matured into realities under their very eyes. Nevertheless, they saw nothing but cramped economies, struggling with ever-decreasing success for their daily bread." At bottom, "they were all stagnationists." Even Mill, the most perceptive of them, "had no idea what the capitalist engine of production was going to achieve."

Schumpeter goes on to say, in one of the most vivid passages in *History of Economic Analysis*, that the Victorians simply lacked style:

> The business and professional classes lived, as a rule, uninspired lives in ugly homes that dishonored the elements of past styles they combined; bought ugly furniture of similar type and nondescript pictures; supported a theatrical and a musical tradition of which the glories were inherited from the past; and read a literature that was largely commonplace in all varieties except the professionally scientific one.

History of Economic Analysis ends with a long but incomplete evaluation of John Maynard Keynes. The "stagnationism" Schumpeter detected in Mill and others culminated, he believed, with the career of Keynes, whose intuition of an England in decline shaped his overall "vision" as an economist. This, Schumpeter argued, had crucial consequences for the direction of economic thought, given Keynes's dominant influence on the next generation of theorists. Conceding at once that

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Keynes was the greatest English economist since Ricardo, Schumpeter criticized him for sharing Ricardo's propensity to apply theory directly to policy, "the habit of piling a heavy load of practical conclusions upon a tenuous groundwork." Keynes, the consummate student of *money*, misconstrued the nature of capitalist *industry*. He "assumed not only that methods of production remain unchanged but also that the amount of industrial equipment does not vary. This restricts his analysis to very short periods of time (3–10 months). Moreover, since technological change is the essence of the capitalist process and the source of most of its problems, this assumption excludes the salient features of capitalist reality."

Even worse, Keynes's focus on a high "propensity to consume" as a way to end the Great Depression overthrew the classical orthodoxy that saving was an unalloyed virtue. In the Keynesian system, saving might be "really a vice that was the cause not of capital formation but of unemployment and capital destruction." In the most ironic of twists, this line of reasoning "attracted many people who had for other reasons renounced allegiance to the values of capitalist society, and thus made Keynesian doctrine—not quite logically—the banner of economic radicalism."

True, Keynes's *General Theory* represented an authentic breakthrough, a triumph of both analysis and relevance to contemporary problems. But Schumpeter, who was always interested in the sociology of knowledge, insisted that Keynes's achievement was specific to a particular time and place, that his theory was not a "general" one at all. "As in the case of Ricardo, it was the intellectual performance spiced by the—real or putative—relevance to burning questions of the time which achieved what, in our field, neither could have achieved by itself." Thus, Schumpeter ends his huge work with a measured but harshly critical evaluation of Keynes, his own great rival.

III

In the contrast between Schumpeter and Keynes, one can see both the problems and the virtues of different styles of economic analysis. One can also see how the utility of the analysis depends on time and circumstance. For Schumpeter, the personal engine driving Keynes's own dauntless energy was his determination to influence public policy and, specifically, to protect the interests of Great Britain. Although Britain had lost her industrial primacy, the City of London remained the financial center of the world. From this circumstance derived Keynes's emphasis on monetary factors and, beyond that, his characteristic focus on aggregates rather than on sectoral analysis. Keynes, writing during

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the 1930s, seemed to promote any policy that might increase the propensity to consume.

Yet once the Great Depression was over, such a policy—often advocated by American Keynesians more than Keynes himself—tended to discourage savings and justify huge fiscal deficits. Equally important, it promoted a generalized policy activism at the aggregate level, thereby shifting attention from individual sectors or industries. Thus, there developed an affinity between Keynesianism and the path of economic policy in America and Britain during the postwar period, and a parallel consistency between Schumpeterian tenets and the industry-specific policies followed by Japan and West Germany.

Keynes's famous witticism, "In the long run we are all dead," epitomized his preoccupation with the short run. "No wonder Schumpeter protested," commented Arthur Smithies, a student of Schumpeter's and himself one of the leading experts on postwar fiscal policy. "Even if short-run policies were based on some notion of the common good rather than on the flow of the political tides, they would be anti-capitalistic in his view. . . . Short-run inequity is the price that must be paid by the masses for the rising living standards that capitalism can achieve." Keynesianism in general encouraged the view that governments can and usually do see the path toward the common good and are capable of acting on it. "Schumpeter must have felt all this to be exceedingly naive," wrote Smithies, and one of Schumpeter's great contributions was to show that effective state action was far more difficult, far more tortuous, than the Keynesians ever dreamed.

Schumpeter criticized Keynes not only on general grounds of assuming too much capability in the public sector, but also for focusing on aggregate management rather than on more mundane but less politically tractable problems of particular industries. For all his brilliance and patriotism, wrote Schumpeter, Keynes refused to "bend the full force of his mind to the individual problems of coal, textiles, steel, shipbuilding, and instead supported resolution of England's difficulties through 'monetary management.'" This kind of comment nicely foreshadows the industrial policy debates in the United States during the 1980s. And, again, it suggests the parallel between the Keynesian system and American policy versus the Schumpeterian system and Japanese policy.

Beginning in the 1930s, Schumpeter was widely read in Japan. As Haberler once wrote, his teaching and writing "had a profound influence on Japanese economists among whom he has many devoted disciples. Most of his books are translated into Japanese; he was mourned there at the time of his death and even the daily newspapers published full length obituaries." Arthur Smithies agreed. Japan is "the country that has probably extended [Schumpeter] more esteem and admiration than

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any other." Smithies attributed this to Japan's determination to develop its economy and the obvious pertinence of Schumpeter's work to that task. It was all a matter of timing, of relevance to the country's stage of development. "His acclaim in Japan leads one to reflect on what might have happened in Europe had he written *Economic Development* at the same time as Marshall wrote his *Principles* rather than twenty years after."

Haberler and Smithies may have overstated their case, and certainly any direct influence of ideas on policy is notoriously hard to trace. Yet it remains true that the Schumpeterian paradigm is a useful way to look theoretically at the way the postwar Japanese economy has evolved. If one did choose to infer the ideas behind policies followed by bureaucrats in elite Japanese economic ministries, those ideas reflect Schumpeterian tenets more than Keynesian or Smithian ones.

Schumpeter's affinity with what many Japanese refer to as their own national "way of thinking" has many facets. His extraordinary tolerance of different economic theories is reflected in the Japanese willingness to use any theory that works. Schumpeter's ability to hold apparently conflicting thoughts in his mind parallels the distinctive religious pluralism in Japan, where Buddhist, Shintoist, Confucian, and Christian doctrines are not only tolerated, as they are in the United States, but are often followed simultaneously by the same persons, with no necessary sense of inconsistency.

Then, too, Schumpeter's attitude toward big business is echoed in the Japanese way of thinking about that subject. Perhaps because large-scale commercial enterprise, such as the Mitsui *zaibatsu* (which dates from the middle seventeenth century), preceded industrialization, Japanese culture has seldom looked with much fear on big companies. In addition, the Japanese state has always been powerful and has never, like the American federal government during the 1880–1910 period, seemed in danger of being dwarfed by the power of giant corporations. Most important of all, since the Meiji Restoration of 1868, economic development in Japan has been the highest public priority. Large and efficient companies, therefore, have usually been regarded not as evil monopolies but as national treasures. There is even a Japanese phrase, *yūryō gaisha* (literally "good company") that has no counterpart in English, much as the American word *antitrust* is not easily translatable into Japanese.

Schumpeter made it clear that the preservation of capitalism required powerful political adjustments and careful management by elite bureaucracies. When big business replaces small- and medium-sized firms, a nation's politics changes: "The very foundation of private property and free contracting wears away in a nation in which its most vital, most concrete, most meaningful types disappear from the moral horizon of the

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people." In Japan, the bureaucracy has seen to it that these elements (notably the agricultural, wholesale, and retail sectors) are protected and thus continue to vote conservatively. This has kept the conservative party in power, and in turn has enabled the system to keep producing at a high rate of expansion in the big-business, export-oriented sector. Schumpeter's ideas about interposing protective strata between the political state and the business system are embodied in a honeycomb of formal and informal institutions in Japan, much more so than in the United States.

Schumpeter, like Marx before him, may well have exaggerated the general dominance of the large corporation, in the sense that both he and Marx believed it would make small business and its personnel (owners, managers, workers) obsolete. This is because neither Marx nor Schumpeter fully understood the principle of industry segmentation. Most industries never become big business, and most people in most countries never have worked for large firms. This is not a matter of estimate or judgment, but of statistical fact. Small companies were and still are a prime source of employment and also of innovation, even if they are created by entrepreneurs for the purpose of being bought up later by large corporations. In Japan, the situation is further complicated by the presence of multiple layers of contracting companies, many of which are exploited by the giants but continue to be sources of innovation.

To the extent that small- and medium-sized companies remain healthy, the Schumpeterian forecast of a collapse of capitalism because of the loss of bourgeois support itself collapses. In Japan a good deal of official attention is paid to this issue, not by attacking giants but by assisting smaller companies, which usually are not in direct competition with the giants anyway, at least in product markets. When direct competition does appear, as in the retail sector, public policy favors the mom-and-pop shopkeepers.

Given his fondness for paradox, Schumpeter would have relished the spectacle of a powerful Marxist influence in Japanese academic circles. This influence has persisted alongside the concurrent hegemony of the Liberal Democratic party, the conservative coalition that has remained in power since the late 1940s. What would have surprised Schumpeter, as Samuelson once remarked, is the remarkable success of the Japanese mixed economy, with its "characteristic amalgam of capitalism and bureaucracy."

Schumpeter often pointed out that the virtues of capitalism are apparent only in the long run, but that taking the long view is extraordinarily difficult. It has now become a commonplace that Americans characteristically take the short-run view, Japanese the long. This difference in perspective has obvious consequences for the making of

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policy in the two countries. The typical American view is the snapshot, while the Japanese way of thinking prefers an extended series of images—the cinema, not the snapshot. In specific industrial situations, this long-run evolutionary view assumes that protectionism is a good idea in some circumstances and free trade is a bad idea. It assumes that a short-term monopoly position rewards and therefore encourages innovation, and thus is not something to which public policy must direct hostile attention. At bottom, the Japanese view, like the Schumpeterian, is grounded in a vision of capitalism as a dynamic *process*, a roiling ferment of constant and relentless innovation. And since, in international competition, the Japanese have been using long-term strategies based on these very assumptions to defeat their American competitors, the Age of Schumpeter may in fact have been upon us for some time now.

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Whatever Was Hidden

FRANCES MAYES

IN THE YEARS OF PLUNDER, I pried up floorboards in the barn and found an old baby shoe and a bill for tires. I rifled through the pages of *Art in Everyday Life*, a college textbook of my mother's. Something must be hidden. "Don't strew," she would say when she came upon me with a drawer pulled out, old photos scattered on the floor. "You strew faster than I can pick up." *Plunder* and *strew*, ancient words: spoils of war, recklessness, booty, scattering, mindless ransacking. I was voracious to solve a mystery. Whatever was hidden, I would find.

When I lift the dust ruffle of my parents' bed, I know at last I have found something. I pull out my father's calfskin suitcase with the Boca Raton Club sticker, slide back the locks with my thumbs. Inside, a tarnished silver flask and a box. I pour the last few drops into the cap, smell it (I know the smell of bourbon), then rub the drops into the blue rug. No one will see, since it's under the bed. The box is full to the brim with gold, but foil, like the chocolate coins in my Christmas stocking toe. Pieces of eight, doubloons, as in peg-legged pirate stories. The edges unloosen easily, like pulling paper away from a cupcake.

The foil is silver on the inside, and I almost know what the rolled balloon is for. There is a larger one in the box, too, with a forked plastic stick shaped like branches that magic people way out in the country hold to find water. I stuff my pocket and go to the porch where I blow up one of the balloons. It doesn't feel like a balloon. More animal. The skin on the inside of my arm feels smoother than the skin of the balloon. I fit one over the front yard faucet and hold it tight while it fills, stretches to bursting. Mrs. Tuggle, the dentist's wife, walks by and stares without speaking to me. I ball up the gold and rubber and bury it under the house in the doodlebug mounds, then sit there staring out through the foundation vent at nothing passing down Lemon Street, nothing happening in the yard except my dog Tish rolling, probably in Daddy's bird dogs' do-do. Nothing else moves, not even the light, faint blossoms at the top

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✪ FRANCES MAYES's recent autobiographical essays have appeared in the *Southern Review*, the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, and the *Gettysburg Review*.

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of the crape myrtle. This is *something*, this box of pirate gold, *something*, but not it.

What are they hiding? Knowing them, they probably don't know themselves. Two blocks away, at The House, I pillage every room. Three times a week I practice on my grandparents' piano. They're never home, and Fanny the maid doesn't care what I do as long as I stay out of the kitchen. She looms over the stove, madly coating everything she cooks with pepper. On the back burner, she keeps a pot of some once-green beans falling apart in salt pork. I know my aunt Hazel's tattered sheets of music, still stuck in the piano bench even though she's been gone from there twenty years. My grandmother's desk has a dozen cubbyholes. One paper is a drawing of a family tree. Her mother, Sarah America Gray, was born on January 30, 1848—before the War Between the States. *Her* father, George Alexander Gray, was born in 1802. I don't know what happened in history in 1802. Then it really goes back; *his* parents, Ransom Gray and Narcissa Alexander, married in 1800. Narcissa Alexander Gray! Married to Ransom. At last, something worth knowing. Too bad this was before the days of photographs. I want to see Narcissa and Ransom. The last name, down in the taproot, says George Alexander, born in 1743, even before the Revolution. I copy the best names on the palm of my hand. Other than that: my uncle's Georgia Tech diploma, dull letters from Hazel about how much she missed home. I'd heard Daddy Jack's family in North Carolina had a French maid and a place in Nova Scotia for the summers. No information at The House, only cabinets of pink and green glass, scratchy afghans folded on the twin beds, crushed corsages in yearbooks, a grand piano with one plinky dead key that I hit over and over, and the grandfather clock marking time. Because of a song I learned in kindergarten years earlier, I believe firmly that it would stop short, never to go again, when the old man died.

At home, jars of swollen pickles glint in the back corners of cabinets where the shelf paper runs out. I look in every chest for secret compartments in the backs of drawers, places to hide amethysts and hand-drawn maps with *X*'s on them. I press the floor, hoping for a panel to spring open, revealing a staircase going down, down to a dirt room full of trunks, or an entrance to the underground railroad where slaves had escaped, although I know our house is not that old and that the town of Fitzgerald did not even exist during The War.

Was I always alone? Where did they all find to go in the long afternoons? I rubbed against every splinter of the house. A cat, pouncing, examining, equally curious and indifferent. Outside, I lift the iron door at the base of the chimney and let the ashes fall out into the azalea bed. I climb closet shelves to push open the attic door with my head. Nothing there but trapped light and enormous whirring blades of the attic fan

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exhaling like a hot beast. In the hall, I lift the heavy lid of the cedar chest and breathe in the dark resinous smell that is death to moths. My hand knows what to push aside to feel the satin lining of my mother's lingerie holders. I know the touch of the cold mesh evening bag she carried in college, its fragile chain, and, inside, the round little mirror she'd looked in so long ago, back in her belle-hood when her father said she was born to break a thousand hearts. In the bottom-left drawer, my fingers find the velvet box, almost soft, like a just-dead mouse, that holds a cool locket and a blood ruby ring, surrounded by chip diamonds. Among the bolts of silk and cotton and flowered chintz, I feel for notes, secret wills and deeds, but find nothing: baby clothes, sheets too good to use, report cards, my birth certificate with the brown ink imprint of my foot before it ever touched the earth.

I spy also. Move silently from pecan tree to privet hedge to outdoor fireplace to behind the barn, listening to my parents who sit in the yard in the early evenings. My ear, against a jelly jar, presses to the wall when my mother has the bridge club. But she only says, "Julianne was a terrible bride; what could she have been thinking of, carrying those calla lilies. She is far too short to carry calla lilies." Opening the door to a closet close to the dining room where they played bridge, I find Mother's friend Martha there before me, crouched down trembling. The summer thunderstorms scare her, and every time she's dummy she runs to the closet to hide. When the storms magnify and the ground shakes with thunder, she even bids three hearts from the closet floor. Adults are pitiful.

I taste all the sharp pink medicines and liver pills in the bathroom, know the sour bush whiskey someone from out in the county brought my father. He calls it monkey rum and won't touch it because it could make you blind. I even sample the cloudy cordials great aunt Bessy sends over from Vidalia, syrupy concoctions steeped from elderberries and scuppernongs.

I'm interested in steaming open letters over the coffeepot, but nothing arrives except bills from Rich's and the Nifty Shop. My new red diary with a small key I keep in code. Since the letter *e* occurs 131.5 times in every 1,000 letters, I try to use as few *e*'s as possible. My own privacy must be maintained. I want to break wax seals. When I walk on the beach, I keep my eyes open for bottles with notes curled inside: *I have been on this island many years.*

I was reading under the covers late, late one night. Not that anyone cared how late I read, but I preferred the blue light my blanket made. I was mad for the War Between the States. I kept a notebook of the battle plans of Gettysburg and Shiloh. Jeb Stuart was all action, my favorite

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man. I would love someone like that but no one else. I was stirred at his cavalry troops singing "Kathleen Mavorneen, the gray dawn is breaking . . ." as they rode off to battle, how he saved the day for Lee. I could relive the time, envision it so strongly that I broke into time. Oddly, I didn't see myself as a plantation belle burying the silver tea service in the back forty as the Yankees arrived. I loaded a gun and took slow aim, dressed wounds on gangrenous legs, stuck my hand in blown-open stomachs to probe for bullets. Since I often went bird hunting with my father, I knew how to shoot. He had given me a BB gun of my own. The War also held some secret, something happened that could not be undone, and I wanted to know. We were branded Southern because of that War, different—better, really—from every other part of the country. I had to find out everything. I knew Robert E. Lee's birthday, January 19, and the name of his horse, Traveller. My mother was a Davis, and I looked at the Confederate president's face for family resemblances. His wife, my mother said, was known to be notoriously unattractive. When my teacher said "Manassas," I told her it should be called "Bull Run," that there was a first and second Bull Run, and only Yankees called it Manassas.

The voices of my parents in the kitchen made a low rumble. I was reading *Statesmen of the Lost Cause.* Judah Benjamin, brain of the Confederacy, was much more interesting than their late night snarls of accusations, denials, ups and downs. What would they talk about into the night if they were not angry? As though under the anger a deep silence waited. "You're walking on thin ice," I heard my father say, "and you'd better be careful."

"If I were on thin ice," she answered, "I'd skate as fast and with as much style as I could. If you're slow," she said pointedly, "you can fall through." Her logic was maddening, but I often agreed with it. I knew neither of them ever had seen any ice. But I could imagine her skimming fast across a frozen lake in a red skirt, the cracking ice always just behind her. I heard the bench of the kitchen table scrape back. "Besides, you *knew* that was the song and you didn't come to me." She flings supper dishes into the sink.

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"On the radio. They were playing 'When Day Is Done.' " She sings in an awful tremolo-y voice, "When day is done and grass is wet, I think of you. . . ." She is close to tears. They are so stupid. I know lost causes.

But then the tone of my father's voice changes. Instead of rising and rising again, as usually it did in their long night sieges, it falls. "All you can think about is some idiotic song." He slams down his glass on the table. "I am dying, God damn it, dying." There is silence then, and I throw off the blanket and sit up. I shine the flashlight out the window

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into the backyard. A gold panel of light from the open back door falls across the grass. Beyond that, only the spring night. Nothing moves.

The panther came into my dreams when I was twelve and never has left. In my dream, I am sleeping. I wake up and find the panther along my body, its black back to me, my arms around it, my hand curled around a big paw. The claws are retracted, but I feel their possibility. I lie totally still, thrilled, terrified, hardly breathing. The ropy, oily suppleness of the body of the sleeping animal, my face against the back of its head. When light starts to slant into the room, I slowly tie a blindfold around the panther's eyes and slip out of bed.

My father was a nuisance with his illness. All his operations were performed in Atlanta. He'd linger for weeks, with my mother staying in the Henry Grady Hotel. I had to live with friends or my aunt and uncle. Finally he needed treatments for so long that my sister came home from college to take care of me. We thought they were going to cut off a leg in one operation. Whatever he had was spreading. When I visited him in the hospital right after that, he said it felt good to wake up and reach down and feel his leg. My sister was the sweetheart of Phi Delta Theta at Georgia and taking care of me was not what she had in mind. Even though she hadn't graduated, she got a job teaching fifth grade ten miles away in Ocilla. Since I was in sixth grade, I was able to grade her papers for her. One of her pupils said Lax was the capital of Georgia, and another said the Flint was the largest river in the world. Our cook Willie took care of us. This suited me fine, but finally Daddy came home and never worked again. I saw his stomach when my mother changed the bandages. He looked as though he had been torn at by a wild animal. His big suppurating wound would not heal.

My father was a bleeder. My own blood goes dark and viscous, thickens even as I'm cut. *Nothing, I'm nothing like him.* "Blue blood," he always said when he nicked his face, the sink swirling with pale blood and water, "blood like the English royalty, all of them are hemophiliacs." His dull nails were almost square, beautiful really, with fine long fingers. Soft hands that never did a lick of work. When we went on a trip, Drew, the yardman, loaded the car. My father did not even lift a suitcase. My thumbs are square like his, but the rest of my nails are oval with clear moons. I don't have his flat bottom, his flat feet, his eyes the color of crude oil. Is he really my father?

Now when I go home to Fitzgerald, I don't know what it is that makes the old clerk in the motel say, "One of Garbert's girls, aren't you? Honey, you're just the image of your daddy walking in the door. Your daddy was something." I don't inquire, afraid to know what that emphatic *some-*

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thing means. I don't see the resemblance, except a little, around the eyes. Sometimes when I look up slowly at someone, I think, that's *his* look: you're interrupting me, but since you are, I'm seeing you as intensely as I can see you.

Whoever he was, I was not. A point of definition. But we all came out of the landscape. In the Carter years, the Yankee journalists were dumbfounded by Plains, Georgia, which is just down the road from Fitzgerald. They tried every which way to condescend, but the place, so completely itself, confounded them. One columnist finally said the stars were so bright they could drive a person mad. I knew he was onto something, but he dropped it right there.

Up close, like the trees on the banks of the river, our roots are too exposed to thrive. A vast shallow sea used to cover this land; it left us swaths of silky white sand, with chinks of ancient shells. Prehistoric looking gar fish meditate on whatever fish meditate on in the brackish sloughs. Leaning oaks and pines trailing their moss in the water are romantic from a distance; up close the branches twist out like arms and legs. My California daughter loves to visit, but she looked out last summer at waves of heat rising all the way to the horizon and said, "How could you grow up with all this emptiness?" It was in our eyes, all of us. A high-school photograph of me shows a pure, uninterrupted face, but my eyes look like the eyes of someone blind from birth. Cypresses grow in standing black water, knobby sun-polished knees sticking up. Trees rising on their own reflections, wrong and beautiful at once.

He dies for three years while I rise, making my escape from childhood. He gets pains at the table, and I don't know whether to stop until the waves passing over his face subside, or to keep chewing. Before he takes to his bed permanently, he rests in the afternoons. Sometimes he calls me, but I play "Stranger in Paradise" over and over in my room, ignoring him. He could call Willie with the little bedside button that buzzes in the kitchen. I can hear her: the good sound of pots and pans clattering. Separated from him by a hall, I lie on my bed reading and eating brownies. The afternoon perfectly quiet. One window open and the curtain lifts, falls, billows, ripples. "Frances . . . Bud, do you hear me?" Sunny light. I adjust my three pillows, hug my book to me with a surge of elation: this is a pleasure I can have forever. I have a new stack from the library: Frank Yerby and Sigmund Freud. Edna St. Vincent Millay and Frances Parkinson Keyes's *Joy Street*, a long way away. I have a fine-tip pen with purple ink. There's a blot of it on the pink linen bedspread. In my black speckled notebook, I copy, "What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why / I have forgotten, and what arms have lain / Under my head till morning; but the rain / Is full of ghosts

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tonight. . . ." Willie comes in with a Coca-Cola. The hairs on her arms are little black curled wires. My skin, white as a light bulb, my leg jutting out, faintly blue, my shoulder with light freckles like beach sand. She flashes gold when she speaks. "Don't you hear your daddy calling you? Him lying in there and you won't answer. Shame."

Everyone but me seems to forget his terrorist past, holding a match under the kitchen curtain, saying the house would explode like fatwood; clicking his change in his pocket after you'd asked him to stop; ripping in half the new too-expensive blouse. His violence never turned toward me, and I know he adored me, in his way, but I will not, will not forgive him. He and my mother twisted too many days out of shape. Somewhere Chekhov says that it would be strange not to forgive. But was there no one in Russia like my father? My love for him is something I want to hide, like notes from Calhoun Bruner, in an outgrown coat pocket. If only a wild bolt of lightning would strike him in the head. This illness is endless. And isn't it just like him?

All the talk is of how brave he is, how very young. My mother has become a tireless Florence Nightingale. For months, streams of visitors faithfully bring his favorite coconut cakes, lemon pies, and flowers.

I stay in my room. I stand naked on the wicker dressing-table stool so that I can stare at my body in the mirror. My hips are as smooth as an empty bowl, and I think my new breasts are astonishingly beautiful. Some girls have got big brown nipples; I hope I never will. Repulsive. I make sarong dresses from scarves my sisters left in the chest of drawers, practice casual, indifferent poses so that when I see Sonny Stone again, I can look sophisticated for an eighth grader. My mother's sister Mary raises her right eyebrow when she is skeptical. When I practice this, I look bewildered rather than sexy. Sonny is a junior and lives two blocks down Lemon, above a grocery store. His father has one arm—a war injury. I'd watched Sonny on rainy days at school when all the students whose classes were at the same hour could just dance in socks on the basketball floor because there was no room inside for all the activities. He could really dance, and he wore only tight black T-shirts and jeans. I could see that the way he held his partner made it easy to dance with him, unlike the bobbing, clumsy boys who'd been in my class since kindergarten. "Stranger in Paradise" seemed written for him. His tight mouth, skinny, muscled torso, blond hair with a hint of red. I'd had boyfriends since fifth grade. We all gathered on Saturday night and sat on steps talking endlessly. We threw triangular folded notes in class, talked on the telephone about who liked whom. But on the arm of six-foot, 110-pound Clifton McDuffie, dancing to "Ebb Tide" in the humid sock-smelling gym, my thick pink angora sweater feeling more like a live rabbit every minute, I lock eyes with Sonny Stone, as he rolls by with

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Pamela Puny Paleface Poor Posture Peterson in his arms. I look down, then slowly back at him. His sharp elbow jabs Clifton. He doesn't say "excuse me" or anything, just throws his head back and winks. Then he starts talking to Pamela, who wears makeup because her mother owns a beauty shop and fixes her hair and face all the time. She has wavy hair and looks up at Sonny with a loose, red smile that shows her sixth-year molars.

In my father's last year, thinned to a boy again, it was hard to imagine him as the swaggering, powerful, big boss who could turn the air blue with swear words. His eyes lost all jolt and spark; it was like looking into old campfires. I ran hot and cold on his sickness. At last, the house was peaceful. No waving of guns, no bottles thrown across the kitchen. I had wished he'd just evaporate for as long as I could remember. Still, I had to check to see if he always had a fresh glass of water. Every morning Mother and Willie changed his bandages and put him in a clean pair of pressed pajamas. They changed the sheets the way tablecloths are changed in dining cars of trains, rolling him to one side and making up the other, then rolling him onto the clean side. Sometimes I was forced to sit with him when my mother had to go out. Francis Ward, our doctor, came by frequently to shoot him up with morphine, so mostly he just lay there in a haze. Now and then he'd rally and talk with frightful clarity about how beautiful the river was when he was a boy and how he picked up the tiny bird arrowheads. Long-lost events seemed to be happening again, even to me as he described them. I could see him as a child, picking the shy Confederate violets for his mother. He smelled awful, like a raccoon run over on the road, a smell I still feel in my nose years later. I have a horror of illness. When someone I love gets the flu, I get mad. "You'd feel better if you'd just get up and *do* something," I say. "It's not good to just *lie* there." I'm mute at the bedsides of dangerously sick friends, can say no easy words, my heart racing at the hospital smells, the disinterested efficiency of the nurses. His skin peeled. I flicked big dry scales off the top of his hand when he was unconscious. Irresistible, but I really didn't like to touch him either and would soap my hands when I left the room. In illness he became sweet, not wanting to cause trouble. And he was silent in pain, never moaning. Backbone made of iron, the doctor said. When he was out cold, I read *The Secret Garden*, imagining hunting speckled butterflies in a walled garden. I did not want him to die with me in the room, and I listened for the sinewy rhythm of his breathing. Would I be able to see his death, something like a transparent scarf, float out of him and out the window? Would it flutter over me as it left his body?

What my mother does the nights of those long months, I have no idea.

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I stay with a friend on Saturday nights. Her parents go out to the club for supper, and as soon as they pull out of the driveway, all the boys in our group appear. We make popcorn, talk, talk, talk. I like Monroe Fletcher, but my first kiss happens with Jeff Hardy as I lean back against the baby grand, laughing. Someone plays the first nine chords of "Blue Moon you saw me standing alone . . . " and he quickly kisses me hard with his thirteen-year-old lips, and I let him while everyone shouts and stomps. Sometimes we end up at Angela Moore's (her parents go to the same place as Edna Lula's for supper). There, on New Year's Eve, I kiss nine boys at midnight. Obviously, I am going to be A Cute Girl. These cold, slippery, tight-lipped kisses are dry runs for the real thing—Sonny Stone for instance. I am sure he wraps Pamela in his arms and kisses her deeply, her back bent as in movies. I imagine kissing someone so powerfully that we both pass out. But when? I practice on an ancient musical teddy bear and on the folded washcloth in the bath tub.

Often at night, my friends and I walk through the Holmes's woods to a wide stream with beautiful springs. Graham Holmes, more handsome than Montgomery Clift, lives a block from me and becomes my real love who loves me back. I played kick the can with him for years. He is natural in the woods and loves all waters, as I do. In daylight you can see through clear water to the boils, which bubble so blue and pure far below that it seems a goddess could be born there. Such pleasure, diving through sunlight in water. Deeper and colder I swim down, my eyes open. I press my face into the icy surge, my fist into the opening in the earth. At night, it's different. We build a fire on the bank, step out of the circle of light to change into bathing suits among palmetto bushes. In the spooky light, which just reaches to the lower tips of swaying Spanish moss, one by one we push off with a running start, swing on a vine, up, out, up, then, at the highest point, drop into the spring, darker than black. When Lard goes, howling out the Tarzan cry, I hold my breath, afraid the vine will snap. We love the exhilaration of the fall into the night. Maybe our shouts scare away every polecat and fox; crocodiles, rattlesnakes, snapping turtles concealed along the tall banks—we know they won't bother you if you don't bother them.

Graham had green eyes and was shy. His father was a judge with a bad heart. Their family went to a cabin in the woods so no one could find the judge on weekends. When I am invited along, Graham and I take a rowboat on the river, throw out an anchor and slip into the water. I shed my swimsuit, tie it around my ankle, and we float and swim downstream with the current for a mile or so. In places the river becomes so shallow that my bottom surfaces. Graham swims ahead of me as I pole myself along the bottom, hoping no fishermen are along the banks. In a deep spot, I slide back into my suit, red with mud. Somewhere, we crawl out

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and walk back through the oaks. Once, bumping the rowboat into the bank, a water moccasin the size of my leg thumps into the boat. Even in the shadows the snakeskin looks greasy, and I see the sliver of black fang slipping in and out of its mouth. Instinctively I jump into the water, where, for all I know, all its relatives hide. The live panic that seizes me as I touch the water sends me straight up onto the bank. Graham stuns it with an oar, finally flings it in the river.

We accumulated a collection of arrowheads, as my father did as a boy. We searched for Yamacraw burial grounds or middens, and I watched for unusual contours along the ground. We fished under bridges, climbed up the sides of an abandoned granary, complete with waterwheel, and crossed a swamp on a railroad trestle, hoping we wouldn't have to jump into the water hyacinths and alligators below. We hunted in waders at dawn in cold duck blinds, taking warm birds out of the jaws of the dog. The cabin was my favorite place to be. Graham's mother canned fruits. His father sat under the scuppernong arbor reading out loud Robert Service's murderous poems of the Yukon. We filled milk bottles with blackberries that were growing out of graves in a colored cemetery. One night, walking back to the cabin where Geneva was cooking ducks full of buckshot on the outdoor fireplace, we stop. The sand road, once on the bottom of the prehistoric sea, glows white as the surface of the moon. What stops us is the pure perfume of honeysuckle, rampant along the barbed-wire fence. My father loved gardenias, roses, honeysuckle. When we drove to the mill, he'd always slow at a low dip in the road, where tangles of honeysuckle bloomed. He always said the same thing—"Smells better than a million dollars." When he came home with roses, he put them on the kitchen counter and said, "See there, we don't even have to go to heaven." The soft road at night and the fragrance seem like heaven. Maybe Graham never thought of kissing before, even as an experiment. We kiss twice, lips closed, chaste and amazed. He breaks off a sprig and sticks it behind my ear, then we kiss again, closer this time, our lips slightly open, just long enough that I feel his breath enter my mouth.

The last summer of my father's life, my sister married. I had a case of poison ivy that looked like leprosy, and everyone was mad because I was supposed to wear pink tulle in the wedding, to be a lady, even though I'd only recently come down out of the trees. Heavy creamy invitations went out to a thousand people, and all Mother's friends went into a frenzy of luncheons, showers, teas for the bride. My father made his last trip out of his room to see her wedding presents on sheet-covered tiers in the dining room. He braced himself on the back of a chair, surveyed the rows of silver flatware, pitchers, and trays. "Lord God Almighty," he said,

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then turned back into the hall, slowly making his way back to bed, totally exhausted. For weeks, the wedding took over everything, and he had to lie there dying on the edge of the celebrations. We all got new dresses prettier than Princess Elizabeth's, who was going to become queen as my sister married. Flowered drifts of voile, peach linen with panels of pleated silk, aqua cotton, pale as the Gulf. My sister's wedding dress fanned out into an immense train. Her fiancé came with droves of people from Atlanta, probably amused to be down in the sticks for a country wedding. I was just learning to flirt, the art Southern girls are destined to practice throughout their lives. That I already wanted all the boys to love me did not produce any sense in me that I had to return the feeling. The object was romance, something like Graham felt about hunting. Jeb Stuart. Tristan. The Snow Prince. I knew my body was semi-divine, never to be bestowed except in an Irish castle, on the moors with Heathcliff, on the wedding night in a glamorous hotel, my trousseau in trunks, flowers filling the room with a secret sweetness, me in white peignoir that floated as I walked like the robes of an angel lighting on earth. Meanwhile, kissing would do. I wasn't exactly sure why anyone would want to do those other contorted things, so awkward and comical.

The adorable blond groomsman, just out of college, flirts back, though I am in junior high. He wants to play golf, and I hear myself telling him I play often and will take him to the club. He ties a sweater with a crimson insignia around his shoulders and wears monogrammed shirts and baggy Bermudas. Maybe Sonny's tight black T-shirts aren't so great. Forest Ripley Harley III has been to Paris, France, and the real Vienna, not the Georgia one pronounced Vi-anna. He's never seen sand greens on a golf course before; I don't know any other kind exist. I hardly know my way around the stubbled course, having played only twice with my mother. The last time, I'd swung back with a driving iron, my eye on the fairway rather than the ball, and thwunked my mother in the forehead, knocking her coo-coo. Maybe Forest is already used to women acting incompetent at sports; he doesn't seem to notice how often my golf balls soar like pop flies toward the rough or disappear into the pond. On the seventh hole, by pure fluke, I hit a hole in one. Forgetting to be cool, I'm thrilled and jump up and down waving the club.

"Too bad you're so young," he says driving home. "You're just so *sweet*." Sweet is not what I want to hear. Dangerous, mysterious, fascinating. I pout my lips: sweet. "Looks are deceiving," I answer, trying to make my eyelashes brush my cheek as I lower my eyes. I've practiced how to look down, then very slowly up with wide eyes.

I hang my arm out the window for the air. My long sleeves in the one-hundred-degree days keep anyone from seeing the seeping, crust of poison ivy, remnant of a day in the woods with Graham. Surges of an itch

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beyond itch flood my entire body, at times so intense I stop breathing. The poison ivy courses in my bloodstream. It's on my thighs, too, hard welts, horribly alive. My father's cancer—no one said the word out loud—might feel like this, or worse. I look at my arm, thinking how can this be my arm. I want to unscrew it at the shoulder, replace it with a well one. If the surges were constant, I could see how you'd fall unconscious or fall into a fit. At night I run hot water over my skin and the sensation of pleasure, just at the crux of pain, is unbearable. The blood-stimulating heat and the water might spread the poison ivy like a gas fire over my body, but I let it run anyway, smiling and biting my lip. How could he be so silent in his room? I could easily scream. Odd, my arm has a memory: anytime I'm under major stress, I get a faint rash along the tender inside of my elbow, a slight itch I don't touch, lest it take hold of me.

A bee got under my sister's veil at the wedding, and she gasped and jerked, lifted the lace, fanning wildly until it flew off. A woman from Atlanta lost her half-slip in the church vestibule, daintily stepped over the clump of satin, and walked on. My father lay at home, watched over for the evening by the yardman, Drew, and a policeman with a gun on the dining-room table, guarding the hoard of sterling and crystal. My sister and Cleve, her new husband, ran by the house to say good-bye to Daddy. Stunning in her going-away suit, she was shining with happiness and crying as she left because they were off to Nassau, then to French Morocco, same blistering latitude as Georgia but a world away. Cleve would be a Navy lieutenant for two years, and she knew they would be among foreigners when the telegram came that Daddy had died. Forest kissed my forehead and said, "Look me up in five years." I smiled, lifted my shoulders; someone had said I had lovely shoulders. Someday maybe someone would drink champagne from the hollows my collarbones made when I pulled my shoulders forward a little. I kept my inflamed arm around my bouquet so he couldn't see the oozing pus.

Mother cried all night, and the next day we were left with packing up boxes and tiptoeing around the house again. Summer burned on. He held, refusing all the ground had to offer. We hired nurses around the clock. There was little for them to do except tell me to be quiet. I'd walk by in the hot afternoon and see the nurse staring at the trickle of urine dripping into a jug on the floor, the only activity in the room except that sometimes a fly crawled over his face, and the nurse would leap up to fan it away. I had a telephone in my room, with my own number. I talked to Monroe and Jeff till my ear went numb. Often my phone rang once. When I picked it up, no one would answer me.

At home late on Friday nights, I look out the window from eleven on, waiting to see Sonny Stone walking home from Pamela's house, right

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behind mine. After flirting with Forest and knowing Graham, I can see that Sonny won't do, but the very thing I see that won't do is what attracts me to him. He rolls up his sleeve and sticks a cigarette there. When Mother and I pass him in the car, I say, "Look, that's Sonny Stone—he said he'd ask me for a date if I were older. He's the cutest boy in the eleventh grade!" She glances at him. "Generations of ignorance," she says, "and probably Vitamin D deficiency." Still, I crouch in the dark dining room that faces Lemon Street. At 11:15, or 11:30, or sometimes midnight, he walks by, obscure as a shadow in his black T-shirt. Sometimes he glances at my house, where I peer out from the edge of the draperies. Before I go to bed, I look in my father's room. His covers are not disturbed. In the middle of the canopied bed, he looks like marble. He already could be dead. The light from the bathroom shines like a white plank over his sleeping form. He won't die and won't die. Frozen like this, he's better than his former swaggering self. "No-fun bastard," I whisper at his door. "What did you ever do for anyone? On whose arm will I come out at the Sub-Deb Dance? You *would* do this."

His reign ended two days before Christmas. His forty-eighth birthday had just passed. I sat in my uncle's Cadillac all afternoon, listening to the radio, pushing the station bar over and over, unable to find anything except moronic gospels and chestnuts roasting on an open fire that I didn't want to hear. We had a tree, but no one decorated it. When my uncle came to the porch and motioned at me, I pretended not to see him. He came out and rapped on the window. I was bloody cold, and no one I knew had even ridden by. "Honey, you'd better go in and say good-bye to your Daddy. They don't think he's going to make it," my uncle said, as though this were news.

The house was full of people. My mother was at the foot of the bed, and she squeezed the daylights out of my hand, pressing my ring into my fingers. My grandfather stood at the door mopping his bald head with his handkerchief: his son, the one he'd worked with, the one who'd once, with astounding bravery, saved his life. The nurse said, "Mr. Mayes, here's Frances, do you see her?" He'd been in a deep coma for days, his breath light as a newborn's. The mill whistle blew for the five o'clock shift. Suddenly he opened his eyes. Not jet black now: faded like an old horse's. He stares. I press my knees hard against the bed. "Yes," he said clearly, "she's beautiful." Last words. He seemed to frown and look out the window, and he was gone from this world. The doctor came in, and my mother started to cry like a hit dog and say, "Oh, no, not after all this." Who knows what she expected, but I understood what she meant.

Just because it was Christmas Eve and we were having the funeral, it rained hard. By the time the coffin was lowered, there were inches of water in the hole. I looked down and the casket blanketed with red roses

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floated, a last refusal. Then he lurched and settled into the clay. I closed my eyes and crossed them hard beneath my lids to keep from thinking. The next day my mother and I went home to Lakeland, Florida, with my older sister. The round lakes in the town were all places where the limestone earth collapsed. One day we saw the movie *The Merry Widow* with Lana Turner, and my mother cheered up, then cried. My sister had three small children who seemed to cry a lot also.

I began to feel the buoyant emptiness that I was to feel for so many years. Even though he'd wasted for three years, death felt surprising, insulting. It seems like such an unlikely thing to happen, especially that his great heat could cool. I thought he was powerful, and to fall—or rise—from mean and adoring to pitiful and brave was too tangled. When we came home ten days later, Willie Bell had moved the canopy bed to the other side of the room and put a different bedspread on it. If only he hadn't said that about me at the last moment. The house felt blank and clean, no mysteries hidden anywhere. I remembered a day a long time ago when my sister learned to drive. We were all at the beach, and Nancy and I took Daddy's new Oldsmobile into town. At a stoplight, she rammed into someone from behind. My fault—I had shouted "Look" at an antique hearse displayed in front of a mortuary. The entire front of the car caved in. Scared, fearing the brunt of his anger, we knocked on the hotel door, where my parents were taking an afternoon nap. Obviously annoyed, he opened the door, and we told him that his car was smashed. "Is anyone hurt?" he asked. We said no. "Well, why in hell did you wake me up?" He slammed the door.

Since my father read no books, played no records, collected no stamps or clocks or coins, nothing tied down his memory. Willie had given his clothes away, thrown out the tree, made cheese straws. I'd missed Rosemary's party. I didn't want to go to school ever again. I didn't care about logarithms, passé composé, or the new Supreme Court announcement that segregation was over. Nothing could touch me. Once his clothes, hunting guns, and the white box containing an old watch, gold cuff links, and his tuxedo studs were removed, he was entirely gone. I wanted a red Jaguar convertible. How quick is oblivion. Over Christmas, all my friends learned how to fast dance. I could dance perfectly in my mind, but with a real partner I couldn't follow a lead and stepped on his feet. I thought, *now I'll never learn.*

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To Meet Mr. Eliot

Three Glimpses

PAUL HORGAN

On a fine summer day in 1956—it was Thursday, June fourth—I touched the door buzzer at the New York apartment of my friend and editor Robert Giroux in East 66th Street. It was answered by T. S. Eliot, who was staying there as Giroux's guest during a brief visit to the United States. I had been invited to luncheon with him, and I was there to make his acquaintance, and presently, to bring him to join Giroux and the other guest, Jean Stafford, at the Carlton House restaurant in Madison Avenue.

He stood in the open door for a long moment, regarding me silently from his stooped height. I gave my name and hand. He accepted both. He was in shirt sleeves and tie, with waistcoat and trousers of a dark grey suit. His head, sleekly haired, seemed small for the length of his frame. His eyes were grey, powerfully taking, under lids slanting aside. Cavernous nostrils in his great nose suggested a hungry indraft of life. His mouth was wide, his chin strong and balled. The general effect was that of composed good looks at the service of sober good manners.

Gravely, he now extended his long forefinger, pointing to the small peephole set with its magnifying lens in the apartment door—a discretionary device common enough to thousands of domestic doorways across the land.

"What.is.that?" he asked in a measured quantity.

"That?—Why, it is a little optical peephole to let you see from inside who is there outside," I said, wondering if I should be more facetious. But, not smiling, he said,

"Let us try it. I will close the door and try to see you through it."

He closed the door. I stood outside a couple of feet from the door. In a moment, he opened the door and said,

"So that's it. Now let us change places while *you* try it."

He stepped into the hall. I stepped into the apartment, closed the door, and fixed my sight at the peephole. Instead of his head and shoulders what I saw was the magnified eye of T. S. Eliot, peering at me through a wash like undersea light. He had his face against the door. His gaze was steady, watery, disembodied, piscine, and unnerving. In his own long time he backed away and touched the door buzzer. I let him in. Now with a delightful, whole smile to declare the little comedy, he said,

"There! May I come in?"

If the scene were meant to break the ice for strangers meeting, it was a success. It trifled with the irrational, it forced two exchanges of identity or position, and it required that good manners hold in the face of deliberate nonsense. In no time we were off and running in the easiest small talk—so small that I don't remember any of it, except an anecdote that occurred to me as we walked down Madison Avenue. How it came up I can't say, but somehow prize fighting was the topic, and I said,

"While I was in the Army I had occasion to report to Fort Riley, Kansas, in 1942, on an inspection tour. Army post gossip is always

✪ PAUL HORGAN, professor emeritus of English at Wesleyan University, is the author of many books, two of which have won the Pulitzer Prize: *The Rio Grande in North American History* (history) and *Lamy of Santa Fe: His Life and Times* (biography).

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lively. At Riley they talked about Joe Louis, who was an enlisted man in the cavalry. It was the time when Nazi propaganda was putting out stories of racial unrest in the United States, Hitler was promising a better life to Americans of color after he won the war. There were negro troops at Riley, some of whom were showing signs of disaffection. Joe Louis was asked to make a statement on public radio and news film. He rose to it in sleepy eloquence. He said, 'There's nothing wrong with the United States that Hitler can cure.' "

Eliot stopped stock still on the sidewalk and hunched his wide shoulders in a slow, periodic laugh. When we reached the Carlton House he was still smiling over the mood of the anecdote, and after we were settled at the table with Robert Giroux and Jean Stafford, he repeated it to them. Bob Giroux's laughter conferred a convivial mood; his hearty cheeks reddened like a schoolboy's. Jean Stafford smiled like a wise and pretty housecat. She was in one of her days to be pretty. Tightly chic in smartly cut tweeds, and wearing at an angle a sly little saucer of a hat, she made the perfect luncheon companion. She began with a little laugh that said something was coming, and in her adolescent boy's voice and in her dangerous drawling mode that yet had something innocent about it, she told *her* prize fighting story.

"I have a Joe Louis for you, Mr. Eliot." He leaned into the story like Old Possum himself. "It begins," continued Jean, "with Jersey Joe Walcott at the camp where he was training to fight Louis in a week or two. The press was there in numbers. The fight would be a wowser. Newsreel cameras put out film showing the Challenger in the ring with his trainer. In almost all of the shots, Jersey Joe was dancing around, mostly backwards, demonstrating the fanciest footwork in the world, backing and spinning away in the prettiest way. The next pictures on the newsreel showed a reporter asking Joe Louis what he thought of the Challenger's tactics. The Champ replied, 'He can run, but he can't hide. . . .' "

A great success with the guest of honor. The luncheon went along in good spirits, to the relief of those of us who knew of Eliot's private troubles at home—the incurable mental illness of his wife, her placement in an institution, his action for separation, his own periods of depression that resulted. In our day with him, despite the light-hearted moments, we could feel an underlying lowness of spirit, however politely he dissembled it. He seemed a quieted man. Something rueful was threaded through the outlines of his greatness as a poet and his position in the literary world. For the sake of civility, the undertone was hushed; but even the structured farce at the peephole seemed to suggest that he must make a special effort to manage such a trifling outgoing as saying hello to a new acquaintance. Were there muted calls upon our unspoken empathy and—even on first acquaintance—our concern?

II

Two years later, in April, 1958, I received a telegram at my home in New Mexico from Lon Tinkle, the professor and critic at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. It told me that T. S. Eliot would be coming to Dallas on Friday, April 25, to give a reading at the University, and it said further that the University had announced that I would be on hand to introduce the poet on that evening. I was of two minds on receiving this. I was nettled at not being asked beforehand whether I would agree to do as I had been told to do—yet who, if not Lon Tinkle, could more confidently put me to work? For years, as the literary and cultural *abiter* of the southwest he had supported my writings with acclaim and approval, and further, he and his family had become my close friends. I must agree with good grace to be on hand for Eliot's evening.

But more—I had been following with delight and astonishment the news bulletins that told of Eliot's wide American tour, now in progress. His public readings were breaking records for attendance everywhere. At the University of Minnesota he had drawn a crowd of fourteen thousand to the indoor stadium. Twelve thousand gathered to hear him at the University of Texas in Austin. These seemed unlikely responses to the esoteric quality and metaphysical climate of Eliot's poetry and criticism and plays, not to mention his famous personal avoidance of over-emphasis in any direction. The whole adventure of his immense popular success was fascinating. I wanted to see him again, and to meet his wife—for after separation from his first wife and her death he had married again. I went to Dallas to do my duty.

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We came together in a quiet place off the lobby of the field house at SMU just before eight o'clock in the evening. We could hear the sustained shuffle and hum of a great crowd entering the building. The Eliots were accompanied by Robert Giroux, who had brought them from New York, President Willis Tate of the University, and Lon Tinkle. Holding a collected volume of his verse, Eliot was calm but remote, harvesting his resources for the ordeal ahead. Valerie Eliot held his arm. Her broad smile spoke for them both. It was enough. She had the conveyed charm of complete happiness. Forty years younger than he, she had long hoped as his secretary that one day he might marry her. She saw him loyally and discreetly through many an ordeal. He came to rely upon her. He came to love her. They were married on January tenth, 1957. On their return from their wedding trip in the South of France, their friends saw that they were both transformed. The change in Eliot was extraordinary. He was as carefree as a boy, and as carelessly demonstrative. He held hands in public with his wife, and caressed her when he felt like it. He showered good will upon anyone. His energies seemed boundlessly renewed—witness the gruelling speaking tour now going on. When he smiled now it was like a personal benediction without a trace of diffidence. If he was called upon for a word in public, say to the press, he would consult his wife with a lifted eyebrow to ask encouragement, and gaining her smile and her little nod of worshipful confidence, he made benign noises for the world to hear. He was a happy man and he did not care who knew it *pace* peepholes.

At thirty years of age, Valerie Eliot was full-bodied and graceful, with a pretty face in the fresh English way of high color, smiling eyes, and ready gaiety. In the Dallas field house she bore herself like a royal consort. Her dignity was easy, and it was always there, but she made of it a means to reach people and let them be comfortable in the presence of her husband. To support her high color she dressed in pastel colors, with many accessories and appendages that wanted graceful management, and got it. Fine bangles, light furs, perimetric hats that yet did not veil expression; and always the smile of genuine pleasure that meant to share an occasion and bless it.

At one minute before eight President Tate led the concert party out into the echoing field house where seven thousand people filled the floor and the balconies. Valerie Eliot went to front row chairs with Lon Tinkle and Giroux. I followed Tate and Eliot to the platform where we subsided for a few moments. Eliot wore a fixed smile but saw nothing except his interior concentration upon what must come, with its nervous heightening as he waited, while the crowd gradually went silent. Now Tate asked Eliot if we might proceed and was given a stately nod. Tate nodded to me. I went to the front of the stage and declared, "Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Eliot,"—my entire introduction. I turned to receive him at the lectern. He bent toward me in grave acknowledgement, set his book on the lectern, put on his shell-rimmed glasses, and waited for a long breath. I went down to the floor with Tate where we took our seats.

Then followed a performance of such unexpected power, splendor, and eloquence that it became for me one of a handful of spiritual events without equal—Chaliapin in *Boris Godunov*, Guilgud and Richardson in *Home*, Feuillière in *La Dame aux camélias*, Schofield in *King Lear*, Toscanini leading Siegfried's *Funeral Music* and *Journey to the Rhine*, Winston Churchill saving the decent world by radio through the instrument of the English language, Stravinsky conducting his last performance of the *Symphony of Psalms*. . . .

Eliot began with early poems—*The Portrait of a Lady* first—that twilit interior picture of love imagined, remembered, lost, and forever claiming. His voice here was meditative, caressing, yet faintly mocking in the character he projected in the lady's words. He read so quietly that we had to strain a little to hear—exactly the effect he wanted, for so capturing us, he held us in his power then and throughout in all the changes of character and mood in the poems. They came in their chronological order: *The Waste Land* entire; passages from *Ash Wednesday*; *Sweeney Agonistes*. . . .

What was astonishing was his transformation from a tall, private, under-emphatic gentleman with perfect manners to a public master of theatre who created scenes in the air and a variety of speaking people in all their various accents. To "neutral" passages he gave an elevated bardic voice, slow-paced, with mellow tone as evocative as that of a hunting horn distant beyond a hill. For "char-

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acter" lines he quickened the pace and flattened the tone in mimicry that made us see who spoke. In moments of fatality we were waved over by a sea of human sorrows. And in all his modes it was the power in his strong, grainy voice that held us.

We were held even when a new and unlikely hazard threatened his reading. The April weather over the central plains of Texas began to turn violent. The wind rose and sang about the walls of the field house. Intermittently for the better part of an hour a storm rose and fell and rose again. We strained again to hear, but Eliot raised his voice and the poems even in their veiled nuances held sway and we heard. The unlined roof of the building bore the tattoo of heavy rain. Lightning flashed against the steel-webbed windows. Thunder rolled rampant. Eliot read on, serenely overriding the storm outside. People could not help stirring apprehensively in their chairs. Eliot read on.

The storm had been muttering its way toward the Gulf of Mexico when Eliot announced *"Little Gidding,"* and updrafts from the warm April rain-soaked land struck high ice in the clouds, and hail fell. It fell like bullets upon the thin vaulted roof of the huge chamber. Against that assault of hard sky action, he read his most attenuated of spiritual abstractions. He read it in a long crescendo, raising his voice against the beating on the roof, pulling us forward in our seats not only to hear him but to be with him. His voice took us individually and together, and we were lost with him, so that when he came to the universal, abiding, sweet commonplaces of

> the source of the longest river
> The voice of the hidden waterfall
> And the children in the apple-tree
> Not known, because not looked for
> But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
> Between two waves of the sea. . . .

it was his enfolding stillness that we entered into against the rattling hail. We breathed according to the pulse of his closing lines:

> And all shall be well and
> All manner of thing shall be well
> When the tongues of flame are in-folded
> Into the crowned knot of fire
> And the fire and the rose are one. . . .

He closed his book, removed his spectacles, and made one step back from the lectern, and the storm broke indoors. Over the long hour the audience had been fixed and silent—and despite the weather outside—entirely absorbed by the emotional power of the poems and moved by the elegance of their delivery. Now in one great mass everyone thundered to stand; they clapped with raised hands; they yelled, they whistled—Texas unbridled. They held him, and held him, while he bent toward them again and again in self-effacing acknowledgement. I gazed about. Their faces were alight with the contagion of feeling brought out by the poems, and renewed by the ovation that fed back upon themselves.

I remember one individual celebration of joy. In the balcony near the platform sat a black woman upon two chairs. She was immensely fat. She was wrapped in a huge garment of fuchsia pink cloth. Her eyes were closed. Her columnar arms were raised above her head. She waved her hands upward like fans of jubilee. Her broad face was transfigured into a mask of ecstacy. In the din I could not hear her but clearly she was crying out "glory." Everything about her suggested a nearly-old woman of the working class and primitive religion. Her dignity was capacious. Yet it was not social condescension to wonder how much she may actually have understood of the sometimes wry, sometimes erudite, often half-expressed ideas and metaphors she had heard. What was superbly plain, and lovely with the honor of poetry's inexplicable powers, was the consuming happiness of that transported being in the balcony.

Willis Tate went to rescue Eliot from the platform. Exhilaration was still Eliot's state when his wife joined him. They embraced. No longer was this the man made ill by troubles he could not assuage, the poet who had only art to love, the tea-time visitor who was snubbed by the shrewish diarist of Bloomsbury for his pallid longing and self-doubt. Privately and publicly he was now a fulfilled eminent man of his epoch, splendid to see.

A festive supper party followed the poetry reading. Tinkle had gathered a dozen or so people in a private room at what then was the best restaurant in Dallas—La Vieille Warsovy. The Eliots had no shyness about showing their love before others. Seated together, like royalty, at one side of the long table, they held hands like young honeymooners. They exchanged open secrets of comedy, pleasure,

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and understanding in company. She was protective among crowds, and he wanted her to be. When she spoke for him in measured accents of responsibility, like a proper consort, he silently confirmed all she said by a smile and an inclination of his head. He took pride in her harvest of new friends whom she made everywhere. She admired him dearly, and he would do anything to bring her pleasure. Her quick, gleeful, pretty smile delighted him. The four decades of age between them was no separation; it attracted fond marvelling by those who saw them so compatible.

Wine flowed at the Old Warsaw. On Eliot's left side was a young matron of Dallas society who was chosen to sit there for her intelligence, charm, cool gaiety, and high humor. He took to her with comfort and as the night went on he became convivial to a degree. Their exchanges were lively, during which she addressed him as "Mr. Eliot." Unexpectedly he leaned to her and said,

"Call me Tom!"

She put her hand to her throat and exclaimed,

"Oh! I couldn't! You were required reading!"

The supper party went right along.

A day or two later the Eliots were to return to New York with Robert Giroux, their old friend, editor, and guide. There were local ceremonies to supplement the triumph of the poetry evening. Eliot sustained himself amiably through addresses and customs of honor, however outlandish they might be under the self-celebrating habits of genial Texans. When made a deputy sheriff and presented with a "gold" badge, Eliot let them pin it on, and—to please his wife who innocently saw it as a serious distinction—he wore it as though it were his Order of Merit bestowed at Buckingham Palace. In another investiture a civic worthy came up to Eliot bearing a large round box. Without indication of what he was about to do, he reached out and snatched Eliot's superb Homburg hat (from Lock's in St. James's Street, London), took from the box a fawn-colored ten-gallon hat and placed it on Eliot's head. Attending admirers cheered, press flashlights went off, and Eliot with the courtesy owed to scheming children accepted the tribute for the pleasure it gave his wife. He wore it to the airport where I was among those who saw him off. He wore it arriving in New York. When with Valerie Eliot he sailed for home, he still wore it as he took ship.

III

In later times, under medical advice, T. S. Eliot had an annual midwinter vacation on one or another Caribbean island. A chronic respiratory disorder grew more troublesome with the years, especially under London weather during the dark months. With Robert Giroux and Charles Reilly, their close friends of many years, Eliot and his wife made a companionable little circle that came together to enjoy perfect privacy and anonymity for a few weeks on warm beaches facing the blue-green sea.

With the turn of the 1960s, foreign travel, including the weeks on winter islands, became more difficult for the Eliots. His health declined. Heavy public engagements were out of the question. Moreover, currency controls in Britain restricted her citizens to a limited amount of money that could be taken out of the country—was it twenty-five pounds? Sources of funds had to be found abroad by British travellers.

Eliot's physical troubles were worsening. He needed to find the tropics in 1963, with a planned stopover in New York on a journey to the islands. Some months earlier Bob Giroux telephoned me, asking for my help in finding a not too arduous assignment for Eliot that could bring him both the reason for travel out of England and enough United States revenue to pay for it.

At that time I was director of the Center for Advanced Studies at Wesleyan University. My first notion was to propose a fellowship of two or three months to Eliot, but that would require him to remain in residence, and so to be exposed to the fog, blizzards, and heavy snows of a Connecticut winter. It then occurred to me that possibly the Wesleyan University Press—this was almost thirty years ago, under a previous administration—might consider engaging him to serve as its European correspondent, with a view to finding and recommending new works in England and on the Continent which the Press might consider for publication. It seemed a reasonable and properly professional notion. Eliot was after all not only an eminent author and critic—he was also an editorial director of Faber and Faber, a leading English publishing house. In an annual visit to America, with a suitable stipend, and expenses paid, he

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would attend the Press's editorial meeting once a year to discuss his findings. I believed the suggested plan held a possible solution, bringing relief to Eliot, and to Wesleyan critical guidance of the highest quality, and, not least, honorable prestige.

To my amazement, the Press people were doubtful, yet I had to respect their honest qualms; would so world-famous a figure as Eliot perhaps overshadow the independence and self-respect of a small university press? Was it possible, too, that the arrangement might too patently reveal itself as a mere convenience, if not a subterfuge, to justify a journey to the United States primarily for the private advantage of T. S. Eliot? All such policy debate seemed to me to threaten an opportunity for a distinguished editorial collaboration. But I had to let the matter soak for a while in its common advantages.

Finally, the Press agreed to a one-year trial run. The treasurer of the University met in New York with Robert Giroux, and in an entirely courteous discussion, set up the terms of Eliot's engagement—continuing reports through correspondence, a generous stipend, and Eliot's attendance at the Press's meeting scheduled for December sixteenth, 1963, at Wesleyan University, in Middletown, Connecticut.

IV

It was a hard winter day. The sky was dark and low. Snow lay beside roads and streets after an earlier fall. Giroux was bringing the Eliots from New York in a limousine. Eliot would be taken directly to the meeting, during which Valerie Eliot and Giroux would attend from the sidelines, without participating. Without saying so, they were worried about his state of health. Mrs. Eliot wanted to be nearby in case she should be needed. The meeting lasted close to two hours, adjourning at about half-past noon. I was waiting for the three of them to come to my house on the Wesleyan campus for lunch before returning to New York in the hired car.

When they arrived at my door Eliot was in a state of near-collapse. Giroux and Valerie Eliot had to hold him as bent double he emerged from the car on slowly articulated limbs. He breathed in shallow, whistling takes. Coming inside, he looked at me but could not speak, but gave me a rueful smile instead. We took him to a sofa in my living room where he sat crouched into his laboring breath. We gave him a glass of Scotch. He sipped it carefully. A droll gleam came into his eye. He held out the empty glass for another. He straightened up somewhat. He found his voice. He looked about and smiled at my profusion of pictures and books. We talked quietly until lunch was announced and when we went in, Eliot walked at his full height, holding his wife's hand as if to assist her instead of the other way round. Watching him lovingly, she lightened everyone's spirits as he grew more easy.

There was no visible concern now. There was wine. A toast was given by Bob Giroux that set just the right tone. Eliot murmured a simple response, and by his inflection turned it into wit, so that we all laughed. At this he sat erect and gave an embracing smile. The talk eased into a sustained flow. Color came into his grey cheeks. The food was right. Conversation built into a four-way dialogue of interest, amusement, and charm. Eliot led it. His exhaustion fell away, and as it did, his wife became an image of relief and pride. He had a second helping. The wine came round again. His slow-paced laughter marked stanzas of talk. His eyes glowed. The clock was stopped for everyone. The luncheon lasted for almost three hours, until the mid-winter afternoon was falling toward early dusk.

In the living room, on the table near his coffee cup, Eliot saw a copy of his *Collected Poems*. He took it up and wrote, "Inscribed for Paul Horgan, after a memorable lunch Dec. 16, 1963. T. S. Eliot" and drew a great three-inch slash underneath that spoke of high spirits.

It was time to go. As the Eliots put on their coats Bob Giroux said to me aside that the meeting had been difficult. Throughout all the preparatory months, Eliot had corresponded with the Press, and now he proposed and discussed a number of literary projects for the editors to consider. Civility and mutual respect prevailed, but the atmosphere was joyless, even though each party honored the good faith—and the uncertainties—of the other. Nothing was resolved. The one-year trial was over. Eliot would never return.

At a little past four o'clock the winter day was dark as night. We all said goodbye, they

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entered the car and I watched them away—my last glimpse of the Eliots, and T. S. Eliot's last time in the United States.

V

He died in London two years later on January fourth, 1965. I heard the news with that sense of shock which briefly makes things seem unreal. It was unexpected that I should feel his death so intimately. The key to my response was the affection, as mysterious as it was true, that persisted in my thoughts of him. Amidst the abstractions and attenuations that shaped so much of his poetry and his life, was a sense of his presence. When, by turns, I think of his work and his days, it is a presence that remains with me like a design for an unfinished portrait of someone I had once known.

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For Want of Dolls

WENDY BARKER

1.
A woman bends
over a blanket she opens
to offer a gift: Peruvian

dolls for the dead.
Formed from shreds, figures shaped
like family, friends, made

to keep the dead from loneliness.
Their yarn mouths grin
wide ovals, loose braids drift

down long skirts, the weave
raveling, threads dropped
from the warp.

Some of the dolls hold
little ones, babies, faces
pale as the shells of eggs.

One lies on her back, swollen belly
covered with a tapestry of gold, red.
Three figures lean over her

as the baby emerges.
I gather the dolls in a row
in my room. Silent

color of berries,
doves, of rings
inside trees.

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2.
Six years old, Phoenix
subdivision too new for trees,
too hot for flowers, I craved

the Story Book Dolls at the dime store,
full skirts that rustled
like petals pressed

into cardboard and cellophane boxes.
Dolls named after stories I read
in my room with the blinds

drawn from the sun, from the square yard
outside, bare except for the oleander,
castor beans we were told

never to touch with our mouths.
I saved my nickels
for months, but all I could buy

was a plain doll, short skirt,
not someone from a book,
Snow White, Sleeping

Beauty cost too much, their velvet
and lace, coiled hair, shining
crowns. I wanted them

to bloom in a row over my bed,
their wide skirts, petticoats
ruffling the bare wall.

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3.
I remember in France, driving to Chartres,
how the cathedral
lifts the valley around it. I remember

our eyes rising to portals
where saints are gathered
in rows, where stone

has been carved into lace, stories
for people who couldn't read.
And I remember how we entered

in silence the vault of light
and faced the rose
window, its great round

ringing circles within
circles
        where doves wing

down to the mother
offering her child,
pale, oval faces blooming.

✪ WENDY BARKER is an associate professor of English at the University of Texas at San Antonio. Among her books are *Lunacy of Light: Emily Dickinson and the Experience of Metaphor* and two collections of poems, *Winter Chickens* and *Ice in the Glass*. This poem is the tenth winner of the Mary Elinore Smith Poetry Prize. The $200 prize is given in memory of Miss Smith by her family and friends. Mary Elinore Smith, who died in 1981, was an editor of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

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The Great-Teacher Myth

ROBERT B. HEILMAN

The film *Dead Poets Society* is now well past its once front-page status, and it may be possible to look at some of its implications without having to duck live or postal fisticuffs. Hilary Mantel's review in the *Spectator* (October 7, 1989), charmingly entitled "Alien Corn," ended thus: "[Robin Williams's] dominant, self-conscious presence surely cannot disguise, even from his fans, that the film is platitudinous, overblown and absurd. But enough. Already I hear the postman's tread." Perhaps any anti-Mantel admirer of the film would have been mollified by *The New Yorker*'s "In Brief" encomium, which singularly abjured metropolitan skepticism: "The picture draws out the obvious and turns itself into a classic [which] has a gold ribbon attached to it." These diverse judgments resemble those in the movie house where I saw the film. A fellow academic and I, who at movies are sometimes given to napping or to feeling that the two hours are not well spent, were not only kept awake by *Dead Poets Society* but put into a bit of a snit by it. The audience, however, behaved quite differently: they all but gave it a standing ovation—an amazing response to a film.

Our women companions come in somewhere between asperity and alleluias. They could listen calmly to the opinionated. In saying my piece, I fell into some familiar terms of dramatic criticism. "Well, they take such a stale line. It's old-fashioned melodrama gussied up to look like educational criticism. First you've got this guy on a white horse charging in to save the place. So you need some set-up black hats to make him look like a hero instead of a moral egotist. Look at what a monstrous, trite, overstuffed setup you get—a school principal that looks like a travesty of Thomas Arnold. The type hasn't been seen since Dickens. You get a Hitlerish papa who screams orders about his son's career. These long-dead types in the 1950s! And when the hero sets out to look like an intellectual giant, he takes aim at a textbook passage on poetry that would have seemed dated in 1910. If the guy in the white hat is in the end a rather simple, sentimental self-worshiper, the scriptwriters are unblushingly devious: they not only invent a passage of incredible stupidity, but they attribute it to a volume conspicuously entitled *Understanding Poetry*. This is, of course, the title of an actual textbook, one that was very influential in its day. The authors of it did not say, and would not be caught dead saying, anything faintly resembling the passage that the instructor, John Keating, so spectacularly takes off against. The authors could sue the producers for defamation of character. Well, this falsification of fact goes naturally along with the general falsification of human reality."

When one starts putting into specific words the general annoyance aroused by the film, one warms to the task. "The hero, John Keating, accomplishes nothing. As for the student rebellion against the incredible headmaster, it is only a temporary knee-jerk application of a Keating gesture. Nothing is changed, but we see Keating watching with smirking self-satisfaction, as if he had in fact dethroned a tyrant, instead of choreographing a fake rebellion against a fake villain. The film gets the firing of this rebel all wrong. It says he was fired for fighting injustice. What he should

✪ ROBERT B. HEILMAN is professor emeritus of English at the University of Washington at Seattle. He is the author of numerous books, including *The Ways of the World: Comedy and Society* and, most recently, *The Southern Connection*.

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have been fired for was making himself, instead of the works of literature, the object of adulation. The film is immoral: it presents a fraud as a hero."

Oh my, I had slipped into Savonarolese. Or, let's just say I got something off my chest. My male companion was roughly on the same wavelength as I. Then one of our female companions said, "Yes, we never do see Keating *teaching* anything." The matter could not have been better put. What we see is moonlight larks and forest frolics—midsummer nights' dream fantasies taken for actualities, instead of that steady book work, aided by sensible explication, that might lead to some education. Keating is not a teacher at all but a performer (the boys call him "Captain"). Like Eugene O'Neill's father, he enacts only one lifetime role: he has cast himself as the gutsy, charismatic, infallible, one-in-a-million guide against the system. Any system needs critics, but Keating is only a guy with a mike in a midnight show.

The film, of course, gets only one-half the picture because it gets only one-half the character. The missing element was identified by Bruce Bawer in his excellent review in the *American Spectator* (August 1989). Aside from pointing out such artifices as those described here, Bawer shrewdly noted that *Dead Poets Society* has the same theme as the 1969 film *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*: both portray the style and influence of a star teacher in a preparatory school. But in *Miss Jean Brodie* we see the full character: the self-worship and power-love of the spectacular teacher who manages to seem superior to a whole cadre of routine-bound dull souls. When I viewed *Miss Jean Brodie* again on my VCR, I found the older film not only convincing but absorbing, indeed thrilling. In contrast with the myopia of *Dead Poets Society*, it had insight into the singular nexus between certain leadership gifts and the ego that cannot settle for a steady engagement in the common enterprise but must star in public displays of extraordinary powers over the young. I have only one slight reservation about this otherwise excellent film: that Miss Brodie's admiration of Mussolini and Franco should have been hinted at rather than stressed, and her comeuppance less hammered home. Perhaps this overtness seemed necessary in 1961, the date of Muriel Spark's novel on which the film was based. Be that as it may, the film had precisely what *Dead Poets Society*, two decades later, lacked: alertness to the moral reality of the tale—to the cult-Führer implicit in the upset-the-peach-basket lectern star, the Eikonoklastes who becomes an Eikon.

Some time after seeing *Dead Poets Society* I ran into a friend who was the successful headmaster of a reputable private school. I asked him whether in his professional life he had ever encountered a Keating. Oh yes, he said, you run into them now and then. He identified by name the current Keating at his own school. This man had written a somewhat best-selling book, one that rather questioned the whole educational process. Hence he had become the resident wise man; he was given to acknowledging his own wisdom, running a special classroom show, condescending to his colleagues, and thus creating a followership that did not ease the basic processes of the school.

An older man, he was perhaps on the way to the role depicted in a 1972 drama, Robert Marasco's *Child's Play*—a brilliant portrayal of an increasing but undefined moral epidemic in a boys preparatory school. Marasco successfully dramatizes, by nightmarish situations that cross over into the surrealistic, the growth of an apparently inexplicable evil spirit in the boys. They are cruel to each other; they are insolent and threatening to faculty and officers; and they particularly victimize one instructor who has won the unpopularity prize of the term. We slowly identify the corrupting influence in the school: the faculty member who is the professional student-lover, the grand old man who, adored by the students, calls them "my boys" (exactly the style of Miss Brodie and Keating). In this English teacher—one more of us, alas—Marasco catches the substitution of personality for a decent discipline, of amiability for the instructional integrity that makes demands, of a subtle flattery for the more difficult task of assisting the young to grow up. Behind this style lies the instructor's pure self-love; it appears as an indiscriminate affection for students that nurtures their self-indulgence. This self-indulgence, when students are freed from the authority of learning and of moral direction, helps release the aggressive nastiness that is always present in human nature. Marasco carries out to a logical extreme the "spoiling" of young people by uncritical, ap-

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parently affectionate tolerance, and he does it by a brilliant paradox: Mr. Chips as Satanic seducer.

It is useful to have a picture of the Brodie-Keating type carried on into advanced years. Brodie and Keating, of course, got fired early, one of them seen through, the other apparently surviving, at least for a moment, in a student style that we are asked to believe is the herald of a new and better world.

The faculty type most recently represented by Keating is, ultimately, less that of a teacher than a performer. He enacts the role of the solitary, anti-crowd voice (the "lonely, self-romanticizing egotist," Bruce Bawer calls him). He is not the occasional individual morally committed against a majority, obviously essential to the well-being of a society, but the professional moral soloist who always has it right while the rest of the world drags on routinely and unseeingly. He alerts the young to circumambient evils and neglected truths while colleagues and administrators drudgingly stick to formalistic ruts. He hints that he has to pay a price. The role forced upon him tends to be the central one in the Passion Play. He struggles to push for truth, but it is hard going against centurions, Pharisees, money changers in the temple, and so forth. (The man sometimes said to have been the real-life original of Keating, a university professor for many years, has published several volumes of essays, and several years ago took on the difficult responsibility of membership on a school board. He would have real grounds for complaint about cinematic misrepresentation.)

II

The Keating types that I have observed directly have performed on the university stage. It is a rare university that does not have its own resident Keating. He tends to become the local Great Teacher, a resonant voice that beguiles its publics (undergraduates and off-campus auditors) while leaving colleagues unmoved, ironic, or simply enduring. As a friend of mine put it, he trades respect from his equals in for adulation by a more populous world. I leave unanswered the question of whether the Great Teacher can also be a good teacher. It may be technically possible, if not probable. The Great Teacher is remembered as a hot on-stage performer, the good teacher as a cool expositor of a body of knowledge that is the essential survivor in memory. The Great Teacher lives in memory as a striking figure, the good teacher as the voice of a field.

Looking a little further at the Keating roles, one discovers that in one manifestation he is the Great Teacher in only one academic field. There he tends to create a sect by seeming to have provided a basic key to human and societal problems. It is a little difficult, as I know by experience, to have in one's class a delegation of Keatingians, who can hardly put up with textual readings not obviously in accord with their master's finalities. His doctrine gives them a corner on Truth. Eric Voegelin makes this point in *Autobiographical Reflections*, where he has written of students who "will not tolerate information that is not in agreement with their ideological prejudices."

But it is a rare Keating who is content to provide a gospel in only one field of knowledge. He is instinctively a generalist who roams the great wide world of information and ideas and makes authoritative disclosures everywhere. Formally he may be historian, psychologist, sociologist, or master of whatever subject interests him at the moment, but he covers the cosmos, partly as encyclopedist, but more as a celebrator of the unrecognized, and most of all as the revealer of widespread inequities, pretenses, and frauds. One suspects that he has a touch of the Prometheus complex, but he is really less interested in stealing fire from the gods than in lighting fires under them. Hence he may be tempted to join such anti-Olympian activities as student marches, protests, and demos, but these have an inherent shortcoming: they tend to impose anonymity unless the TV cameramen are especially discriminating. Hyde Park is better; it gives full scope to the individual golden tongue. But all lecterns are worthy stages, and they are the essential props.

Keatings will teach summer school, night school, and extension courses, and resist retirement. One woman auditor of a certain Keating (and obviously more an admirer than a detractor) told me, "His life is the podium. He never wants the final bell to ring. When the lecture is over, he is dead." With such a stream of appearances, the performer tends to play familiar roles. More accurately, there is only one role, the White Hat role; it is rather

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the chosen topics that become familiar. Once my wife and I had to attend an institutional dinner at which the Keating of the time was the featured speaker. We found ourselves coming up with the same question: "What will he do tonight—Vietnam or Watergate?" Our topics were wrong, but our idea was right. The themes were Nagasaki and poverty. Apartheid and Palestine got into the repertory later. And of course all American styles in Central and South America.

Keating's feeling for audiences means that he is a star in the city and the region in which his university is located. He charms listeners as he holds forth on many political, social, and economic topics. His role is instinctively that of the man of insight who, despite institutional indifference or even hostility, is bringing truth home to hearers who would otherwise be deprived of it. What ultimate influence his ideas and attitudes have upon the beliefs and actions of his audiences no one knows. The one unmistakable effect is the admiration for the speaker who enacts, with a great deal of stage presence and skill, this love of truths otherwise neglected, this perception of failure in most of the powers that be, this unique grasp of what are inelegantly phrased as "moral bottom lines."

The listening public attribute to Keating an objective greatness that they are sure is rejoiced in by his professional colleagues. "It must be great to be on the faculty with a man like that." That popular enthusiasm, of course, gets into the press, which regularly refers to Keating as "the university's great political scientist." Public and media simply have no way of knowing that Keating has never, in person or writing, spoken to political scientists, and that political scientists have never heard of him. A faculty friend of mine once said to another colleague, a distinguished scientist, "But these people in the city, the Keating-worshipers—they have no idea at all who our really good professionals are." My friend said that the scientist replied, "But it is better that way." Perhaps he meant that genuine intellectual merit does not lead to popular esteem. Or that the meritorious are saved from the perils of adulation. (Of course, that stance can be dangerous too. One may fall into the Byronic pose, "I have not loved the world, nor the world me," and regard this as proof of unique quality.)

III

It is one thing to admit one's reservations about the Keating type who evokes worship for his personality and leads innocents to suppose that excited response to charisma improves upon an orderly process of learning, unspectacular and even grinding as this sometimes has to be. One seeks a catharsis for professional dismay. But after acknowledging annoyance, one can look at the scene again and try to understand why it is as it is. One may perceive the falseness of *Dead Poets Society* and yet be aware of, and wonder about, the admiration it excites. To many moviegoers Keating has seemed a true hero. Numerous students, including some of my own grandchildren, are Keating-worshipers. We might simply say that too many people are susceptible to the pied piperism of a charmer who feels undervalued by the system. But it is also possible that Keating-worship has a social use of some kind and hence signifies something less negative than defective taste and uncritical acceptance of cinematic herohood.

In the academic world and in the larger community there are standard ways of feeling about corporate or institutional life. We live, of course, in an indispensable "system" or organizational structure, and no one except anarchists questions its indispensability. Yet a great many people, perhaps even most of the people some of the time, are suspicious of it, complain about it, distrust it. "School spirit"—that is, conformism with enthusiasm—evokes, now and then and here and there, a certain fear that such belonging is simply serving someone else's ends. These doubts come out of the romantic temper, which always goes for private insights seen in conflict with mass myopia (and tends to ignore the extent to which the seer's ego or psychological self-interest may skew his seeing), and which characteristically regards the necessary system as unresponsive or hidebound or downright devious. Keating provides an outlet for these suspicions: in him the public sees an apparently knowledgeable insider publicly voicing complaints that appear to validate the usual suspicions. The point here, of course, is not whether or to what extent the suspicions are justified (the makers of *Dead Poets Society* try to justify them by offering, as the real thing, a dated and incredible headmaster and

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a ludicrous literary doctrine that the school allegedly takes seriously), but simply that the suspicions exist. They exist because of the romantic cast of mind, or, more precisely, a specific mode of the romantic—that is, the melodramatic sense of reality. The melodramatic spirit uses the attack mode: it always sees accepted ends threatened by stupid, ossified, or self-seeking forces that can be identified and hence eliminated.

The actual knowledge generating the attack may be limited or inaccurate; the students who respond to Keatings do not know whether the university, and the world generally, are as marked by ineptitudes, deficiencies, and misdirections as the Keatings declare. But they trust Keating because he voices or embodies their suspicions that all is not well in the management of institutions and societies generally. This is not to say that all *is* well; it is rather to say that the sense that all is not well reflects less an objective institutional situation than the cast of mind that I have called melodramatic.

We are dealing with a kind of social reality: not so much the evil suspected as the act of suspecting it, a psychological impulse in Keating's audience. Keating may tease this audience into some symbolic spectaculars (as he did with the boys in *Dead Poets Society*); but, by and large, he prefers the role of "J'accuse," which thrills both actor and audience. If he calls for actual revolt, he is pretty likely to pick on a straw man; in the film, for instance, he has the boys tear out of their textbook a passage that was out-of-date, and indeed unimaginable, long before the time depicted. His role is not actual revolt, which may be burdensome and painful, but the much more comfortable and symbolic revolt that validates his audience's prior sense of flaws in the system. They gain a sense of possessing truth, but without serious cost. In fact, Keating may even manage his "J'accuse" rather indirectly: by a style which implies that all other styles are inferior, by a personal touch that devalues all the rest of the institutional procedures. Keating's students revolt only by conversion to the style of the guru, and often by deifying him.

The men and women who really shape and maintain the institution—by professional discourse with colleagues in the larger world and by steady, systematic instruction at home—do not warm up much to the Keatings. But the final picture is a little less simple than it may appear up to this point. It contains an irony that may even be mildly surprising. For the Keatings of the world, one comes to see, are of a certain kind of institutional benefit. Not that they in any way change things, for they do not. Rather, what they accomplish is this: if on the one hand they gratify the students' sense that something is wrong with the situation, on the other hand they convince the students that here is a force for excellence that counterbalances the failures and may even in time triumph over them. One Great Teacher, as it were, redeems the place otherwise thought to be too much in the hands of routinists and dullards often asserted to be indifferent to student interests and needs. The Keating dissonance becomes a symbol that all is, if not well, at least not lost.

Thus, Keating acts as a kind of safety valve for discontents, suspicions, and negative judgments that could be disruptive without being productive. What is more, Keatings may indeed serve to attract subversive emotion that might otherwise be kidnapped by true moral desperadoes with programs. Organized leftists operate wholly within the melodramatic sense of a good versus evil world, which I have identified as an element in the American sensibility: the naive leftists believe it, and the activist plotters count upon it and use it. In the 1960s the latter, bent upon disruption as a route to destruction, wanted to close down the universities. This might lead to an anarchy in which force could take over. I have some evidence to go on as I surmise, and would even bet, that the Keatings joined the mainstream in resisting closure. Obviously they were not going to surrender a platform and stage important to their own being, and encourage a dictatorship in which they would not be tolerated. Motive aside, the anti-closure stance was a force for the better against the worse option.

IV

Another irony: the Keating who is hardly a hero to his colleagues, though a shining figure to students and in the non-academic world, may unconsciously serve the university whose shortcomings, along with those of society, he is always implying or voicing. The outside community has for the most part few

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means of judging either the university or Keating's status within it. Hence his apparent omniscience and keen judgment of the world seem convincing evidence of his professional distinction and even of the university's quality. Just as a platform man, he is welcome in the city. He is asked often and is always available. He talks easily, as many of his colleagues do not. They rarely make effective public figures, whether from shyness, discomfort with a lay public, immersion in fundamental professional activities, or at times, no doubt, an unfortunate snobbery about a "popular" audience. Hence public gratitude for, and admiration of, one who relishes the public podium; his skill as a speaker creates a pleasurable aesthetic experience for his audiences.

But in addition to this technical skill, he is a natural candidate for herohood in a world glad to have heroes and rarely finding them in academic circles. He always wears the white hat; no doubt at times he seems a solitary voice against the evils of the world. Yet "solitary voice" implies an eye for unacknowledged evils, a willingness to give pain even to an enthusiastic audience, as if he were probing for consciences unknowingly willing to be stirred. Actually Keatings, as I observe them, do not seriously risk arousing major self-awareness, and hence possible resentment, in their audiences. A Keating seems to have an instinct for what one might call acceptable targets. He is far more likely, for instance, to censure South African whites than to point to local shortcomings in the treatment of minorities. He will be harder on national policy than on tough regional cases. Be that as it may, he sounds heroic, and in time he becomes a university star. If he points to shortcomings in the university administration, his very membership in the university makes it seem a better place. It maintains him, the voice of every man's discontent with institutions. Thus he may help generate, ironically, emotional support for it and also, perhaps, even material support.

"Support." In a day when the standard sources of income—state budgets for public universities, and alumni-provided endowments for private ones—seem increasingly inadequate, an educational institution has to call more and more upon a public with which it may have few obvious connections and upon which it may have fewer incontrovertible claims. Of course the university may argue, and usually does, its concrete benefits to its home area—city, state, region—and indeed to other areas in which a consenting public, according to surveys, may be assumed to exist. The approach is by now familiar: a flock of our MBAs have turned various businesses into multi-million-dollar affairs, and our medical-school inventors have come up with various machines and miracle drugs to make life longer (if not happier). But few fields of study can make such claims; and the general public is little interested in the intellectual life that is the nominal raison d'être of the university (unless the intellectual life has striking visible accompaniments, as in space science, seismology, etc.). Hence the institution is considerably dependent upon irrational goodwill. I suggest that, ironically, some of the goodwill is generated by the Keatings, who manage to voice everyone's vague discontents with life (especially the suspicion that these are owing mainly to institutional imperfections) and at the same time to symbolize the forces that can make things better. The Keatings speak for causes that have appeal, and they put the finger on villains, mostly standard villains rather than figures held high in public esteem.

What I am getting at is a fascinating paradox: the irrational sources of support for institutions nominally devoted to the rational understanding of human experience. There are, of course, rational or apparently rational sources of support—awareness of the need for education, perceived indebtedness for one's own education, and of course Tax Deduction Science—ones that hardly need our attention. But we are quite likely not to notice the irrational sources of support, aspects of institutional life that somehow stir uncritical admiration in the wide outer world. The Keatings of the world apparently have this effect. And then there is a delightful irony: football has the same effect, exciting the emotions that generate support.

Even Keatings sometimes join the public for which football status is a significant indicator of an institutional worthiness that demands support. Only very old universities seem to escape this value judgment; their long life means an adequate mass of big-name alumni to "excite the emotions that generate support." Even in that world, however, too many football defeats may make old boys

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restive, as if alma mater were slipping in the performance of some significant household rite. But in the great parvenu world of state universities, where I have taught for a lifetime, decent football is, in the public eye, an indispensable symbol of membership in the institutional elect. A winning season is a Nobel or two for hoi polloi, who thus feel stirred to support laboratories and even libraries. A state university president once told me that in the year after his university's team made a rare appearance in a major bowl, the *unrestricted* contributions to the university reached new heights. (Indeed, aside from symbolizing institutional excellence by its success, football may guarantee institutional health by its presence. In a story that has traveled widely on the university gossip circuit, a University of Chicago president says, "We must get football back, or we'll have all the kooks in the country here." One hopes that the story belongs to the canon rather than the apocrypha.)

V

This is not the place for a history of irrational motivations that inspire support for institutions formally committed to a rational understanding of life, or for exploring the theoretical issue of whether true good can come out of the constant pointing to naughtiness. I do no more than suggest an ironic reality: the institutional malcontent as somehow guarantor to the public that the forces of truth are strong in the institution, or the maverick as the unintentional assistant in the promotion of the order that makes him a maverick. He satisfies a need for heroes, a role that the true scholar hardly aspires to, and for which the true intellectual would generally be but an ungainly aspirant. The maverick's charisma as dart thrower makes him seem a utopian seer. Fortunately he does not have a program; if he did, he would become a menace, probably Marxist.

As a performer, he prefers role to program, attitude to the complexities of understanding. As Great Teacher, he may crop up even in places able to survive without much football glory. Though attracted, as I have noted, to the Promethean role, he occasionally likes to toss Jovian thunderbolts. He tends to latch on to approved targets: recently he has been tossing harpoons at the Great White Male evil. As a teacher in the humanities, I must acknowledge that he is usually one of us, a teacher of English, or of the softer social sciences; he rarely comes out of mathematics or the sterner sciences, which are less conducive to editorial and theatrical spectaculars by white hats.

But I have been meaning to do him justice, to define his utility. I cannot forget the glowing response of the cinema audience, and subsequently, to descend to the personal, of my grandchildren, two sets of them. When *Dead Poets Society* came up for discussion at family dinners, I plunged in without first testing the waters. I held forth on how it was immoral when the teacher became greater than the thing taught, living in the adulation of innocent youngsters. One set of grandchildren ordered me to leave the table. The other set, more mindful of the infirmities of age, sentenced me only to loss of dessert. When I tried to pull myself together, in later postmortem reflection, I decided that my punishment was a small price to pay for the knowledge that my descendants would all support their various colleges, happy in the certainty that on each campus the local Keating would, by presence and voice, guarantee that truth had a foothold amid institutional apathy and sinuosity.

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The Mountain Where Old People Are Abandoned

SHARON HASHIMOTO

I have no use for old people in my village. Anyone over sixty must be banished and left in the mountains to die.

—from a Japanese folktale

The sun beats so hard against my head,
my neck bends and I settle my cheek
between the blades of his shoulders,
feel his muscles straining
as he carries me up
into the hills. Was it so long ago
when I carried him before me,
his growing weight between my hips,
the shrimp-like curve of his spine
pushing out the wall of my belly?
I don't remember pain when he broke
from my body but with each step
I feel him pulling further away.
His back bows beneath my weight.
How will he remember me when he won't
look into my face—as if to say,
this is not his decision.
Young, he can't believe the ripples
in the lake water are of his own face—
how when the flesh weakens, the mind
becomes strong. I can forgive him,
but I cannot hide from my death.
Like a puppet my arms and legs
wear his every movement.

✪ SHARON HASHIMOTO is a writing instructor at Highline Community College in Seattle, Washington. Her poems have appeared in many magazines, including *Poetry*, the *Carolina Quarterly*, and *Ironwood*.

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Svevo's Witness

VICTOR BROMBERT

Italo Svevo seems to have been embarrassed by his Jewishness; he hardly ever mentions it in his writings. His fictional work simply elides the subject. In his self-promotional autobiographic essay, "Profilo autobiografico," there is not a word about his Jewish family background. He elusively refers to his foreign-born father as an *assimilato* in the city of Trieste, which itself is referred to as a "crogiolo assimilatore"—the Italian equivalent of *melting pot*. Although the "Profilo" opens with a reference to his provocative pen name ("Svevo = the Swabian bringing the Germanic into fraternal alliance with Italo = the Italian"), not the slightest reference is made to his recognizably Jewish name, Ettore Aron Schmitz.

True, as Svevo's biographer John Gatt-Rutter reminds us, the "Profilo" was drafted in 1928, at the height of fascist nationalist feelings, and understandably lays stress on Svevo's credentials as a lifelong Italian patriot. Thus the "Profilo" hastens to state that both his grandfather and father married Italian women, but again not a word about the totally Jewish background of these wives. Svevo himself married into a family of converts, the prosperous Venezianis. His wife's mother was a Moravia—another recognizably Jewish name, indeed the very name of Svevo's own mother, for Svevo married a cousin once removed. Livia Veneziani had been raised as a Catholic, and to please her, at a time when she was ill, Svevo had himself baptized, though he remained hostile to all religion. His atheism is probably what Livia had in mind when, in her biography of Svevo, she referred to his "pessimistic vein."

Following Svevo's lead, Livia in *My Husband's Life (Vita di mio marito)* remains altogether evasive about his Jewish origins and family atmosphere. It is the Italian background that she stressed. "The son of an Italian mother, he felt totally Italian." Although she covers Svevo's literary career in considerable detail, she fails to mention that his first published article, a unique concession to a Jewish theme, was quite revealingly on Shylock. She refers at length to Svevo's friendship with Joyce, even evoking discussions between the two writers about the figure of Leopold Bloom, but she does not so much as hint at the fact that Joyce on these occasions consulted Svevo at length on matters Jewish. Instead she underlines those aspects of Svevo that make him an *"uomo europeo"*—not once forgetting to insist that he was first and foremost Italian and Triestino.

What is more striking still is that in his fictional writings Svevo seems to avoid all themes, subjects, or characters even remotely Jewish. H. Stuart Hughes in his survey of Jewish Italian writers, *Prisoners of Hope: The Silver Age of the Italian Jews, 1924–1974*, understandably asked himself: "How Jewish was he, if he seldom mentioned his origins and wrote novels devoid of Jewish characters?" The answer is far from simple and goes to the heart of Svevo's indirections, oblique strategies, ambivalences, and irony.

The hard fact is that Ettore Aron Schmitz's childhood and adolescence were steeped in Jewish-Triestino life, surrounded by relatives and family friends whose names ring like a directory of Trieste's Jewish community: Pincherle, Cohen, Weiss, Wertheimer, Ziffer,

✪ VICTOR BROMBERT, Henry Putnam University Professor of Romance and Comparative Literature at Princeton University, is the author of, among other books, *Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel* and *The Hidden Reader*.

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Levi—including also the more Italian-sounding Jewish names of Morpurgo, Finzi, Vivante, Ancona, Camerini. Moreover, it appears that his parents were observant, that he attended the Jewish elementary school directed by the chief rabbi of Trieste, and that when his practical-minded father decided to send him and his two brothers, Elio and Adolfo, to a German school (German was considered essential for a business career in Trieste), he chose the Brüssl'sche Handels- und Erziehungsinstut in Segnitz on the river Main, whose Jewish headmaster, Spier, catered in large part to a clientele of German Jewish business families. Svevo's reluctance to deal openly with his Jewishness is all the more remarkable in that the Austro-Hungarian port of Trieste, which prided itself on its relatively independent status, was, unlike Austria, where anti-Semitism ran rampant, a city where Jews had known early emancipation, were respected, and enjoyed a leading role in the community.

Even in the private papers, notes, reminiscences, and correspondence, there are surprisingly few references. The few exceptions do not amount to much. About Kafka ("his last literary love" according to his wife, Livia), whose condition as a multiple outsider offers a number of parallels with his own, Svevo observed with typical understatement that to be a Jew was not a "comfortable position." Much earlier, in a letter to his wife, referring to a career possibility, he noted pessimistically: "I sense that, as we Jews say, the Messiah will not come from that direction." Elsewhere, he sallied in an almost existentialist manner: "It isn't race that makes a Jew, it's life." In one of his last letters to Mme Benjamin Crémieux, there is a playfully bitter allusion to those "blessed Rumanians, with all those anti-Semites." And, in an article on Richard Wagner published in the same Trieste newspaper that had published his piece on Shylock, he noted, with apparent objectivity, that the composer's anti-Semitism was of a cultural and critical nature, that it was based on the notion that Jews are cosmopolitan "mediators," therefore incapable of genuine artistic creativity.

It is not surprising that H. Stuart Hughes found Svevo's rare references to his Jewish origins inconclusive and puzzling. In the wake of the critic Giacomo Debenedetti, who blamed Svevo for having repressed the Jewish element, Hughes even refers to a brand of Jewish anti-Semitism illustrated by Otto Weininger, who defined the Jewish psychology as one of "feminine passivity suffused with self-hatred." Hughes rejects this extreme view in favor of a more smiling notion of crypto-Jewish survival humor.

Hughes's intuition of literary disguises and transfers of the Jewish theme is undoubtedly correct and finds powerful support in a late, unfinished narrative of Svevo's published posthumously, *Corto viaggio sentimentale* (Short Sentimental Journey). In it, a wandering protagonist, Signor Aghios, is made thoroughly uncomfortable by a fellow traveler, the boisterously xenophobic insurance inspector Borlini, who expresses suspicion about Aghios's non-Italian (Greek) name, accusing him moreover in a philistine manner of being a "poet in disguise" ("*poeta travestito*"). The hostile glance of the fascist Borlini in the train compartment corresponds to Signor Aghios's multiple insecurities and disguises. For the Greek name—Aghios claims apologetically to have only a very "distant" Greek origin—is not only a recognizable pun (Aghios/Hagios, the saint), but brings to mind another traveler also away from his Penelope, and also carrying an ancient scar, Ulysses. But the ironic Ulysses theme is in itself a transparent transfer. Borlini's ostensibly Greek-directed xenophobia has all the earmarks of anti-Semitism. And Aghios, self-conscious about genetic determinism, experiences a characteristic blend of guilt, atavistic resignation, vulnerability, and pride in not belonging.

Some of Aghios/Svevo's statements have an ironic confessional ring: "It's convenient to belong to another race. It is as though one were perpetually travelling"; "If one is born in a certain way, one stays that way"; "I come from a more ancient race than the Celts." The reference to the Celts is a signal that even the link with Ulysses has a special meaning: the Greek and Jewish motifs are bonded in the literary friendship with Joyce. In a lecture on Joyce given late in his life, Svevo remarked that Joyce's Ulysses, a transplant in the modern world, respects the gods and loves his family as does "the Jew Bloom," and that there exists a singular affinity between the Jewish and the Irish people, two races with dead languages ("*. . . i due popoli dalla lingua morta*").

Nor surprisingly, Svevo's choice of pen

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name is more revealing than would appear at first. His pseudonym provocatively and defensively couples the Germanic and Italian elements in his background, referring all at once to his German schooling, his Triestino irredentist allegiances, and to his ambitions as a writer whose native idiom, far removed from the Tuscan literary language, condemns him to write in a foreign tongue. But there is perhaps more in this contrived Italo-German name than a mere allusion to the two national identities. The Italian-sounding Svevo (the Swabian) refers to a region in Germany precisely in the manner in which many names of Italian Jews (Morpurgo or Moravia, the name of his mother, are good examples) refer to specific regions or towns. Such a sly, imbedded "Jewish" signal becomes even more likely in view of the information his brother Elio gives concerning the paternal grandfather, Abramo Adolfo Schmitz, who was a native of Köpchen, a town in Transylvania where the Germans spoke a Swabian dialect.

The question of Svevo's Jewishness is not merely a matter of setting the record straight, or of diagnosing a fairly well known malaise of the culturally assimilated Jew. In the lifelong struggle between Schmitz and Svevo, between the family man and businessman and the artist, it may now seem that the ultimate victory rests with Svevo the artist. But such a view fails to take into account the distinctive Svevian shuttle between art and life, and his thematic inspiration—whether the suicidal maladjustment of Alfonso Nitti in Svevo's first novel, *Una Vita*, the premature sense of defeat of Emilio Brentani in his *Senilità*, his character Zeno's painfully humorous and estranged insight into his own consciousness, or Aghios's wily development of survival values—always rooted in a keen perception of family situation and experience.

The key document, one with which Svevo was intimately acquainted and to which he even contributed, is his younger brother Elio's diary. Elio Schmitz (1863–86), who revered his elder brother, died in his early twenties of a chronic illness. The *Diario di Elio Schmitz*, which gives detailed accounts of the family atmosphere and of the brothers' common school experience, adolescence, and early efforts at entering into the world of adults in fin de siècle Trieste, was carefully kept by the family and was released for publication in 1973 by Svevo's daughter, Letizia, almost a century after it was written. From Svevo's wife, Livia, we know that Svevo, deeply affected by his brother's death, preserved the *Diario* "religiously" throughout his life "like a precious relic."

Elio and Ettore were very close. Together they faced paternal dictates. They studied, wrote, practiced the violin in the same room. When it came to literary ambitions, Elio felt his brother's vicariously, and with pride. Unconditionally and touchingly, he accepted Ettore's intellectual superiority and pretended to do nothing more important than serve as his chronicler. "How well I have written his history!" he noted, adding humorously: "Napoleon never had a historian who admired him as much as I admire Ettore." The Napoleonic reference has its own significance in the context of a success and career-oriented mercantile society that did not take the artist seriously. Elio's aesthetic cult of memories provided Ettore with a mirror-like referent. Many years later, he advised a budding English writer to look at himself daily in a textual "looking glass" by writing down an account of his day in order to achieve self-knowledge and "a great sincerity." In a sense, Elio's *Diario* provides the basic example of such a private looking glass and constitutes an oblique confession made even more personal by the several pages Svevo contributed in his own hand and which emphasize derogatory self-assessments.

Objectively, Elio's *Diario* casts precious light on family values in the Jewish community of Trieste, and more generally on the social, political, and artistic life of the city at a time when *irredentismo*, the movement for unification with Italy, inspired many of the liberal elements of this thriving Adriatic port that was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. We learn of the two brothers' deep attachment to their native city, of their conflicts with their father, of the pressures of the business ethos and careerism, of the young men's sense of servitude and humiliation in a bureaucratized society. Their common experience in the German boarding school in Segnitz, their artistic ambitions and projects, their procrastinations and uncertainties are all vividly described and help us understand better some of the recurrent themes in Svevo's work. Svevo's own character traits are sharply delineated.

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About the Jewish background, the brother's diary is particularly open and informative. Elio provides a genealogy of the large family; he talks candidly about prevailing opposition to intermarriage; he gives otherwise unavailable details about the festive Friday evening meals, the Jewish wedding of their sister Natalia under the traditional canopy, the celebration of Purim, which their father did not like, their father's selection as Hatan Bereshit—a Hebrew expression meaning "the bridegroom of Genesis"—an honor that entitled him to read the beginning of the Pentateuch during services in the synagogue. Repeated mention is made of anti-Semitism, especially of the Viennese variety. Of particular interest is the account of Ettore's humiliation when, after much time spent in the waiting room, he was refused an entry-level job for which his knowledge of four languages qualified him "because the candidate is a Jew." Is it a simple coincidence if Svevo's first article, on Shylock, was written just a few weeks after this experience?

As cultural background, the *Diario* of Elio Schmitz is also a precious document about the social, economic, and artistic climate of Trieste. This port city (Austria's only direct access to the Mediterranean), this bastion of Mitteleuropa business mentality, enjoyed a surprisingly rich theatrical life. A number of theaters offered first-rate performances of plays ranging from Alfieri to the most recent authors—Giacosa, Sardou, Dumas father and son, Strindberg, Ibsen—and invited such great stars as Eleanora Duse. The theater life that the two brothers followed keenly was part of the *italianità* of Trieste.

For Ettore and Elio, the images of Trieste and of Italy tended to merge. As Triestine students in Germany, they felt entirely Italian. But in their case the notion of *patria* (fatherland) was both abstract and concrete: abstract, because they were not Italian but Austrian subjects; concrete, in that their notion of *patria* was focused not on a nation, but on their native city. One thing is clear: neither brother felt any allegiance to Austria, and the idea of compulsory military service in the Austrian army, with a possibility of having to fight for causes not their own, was repulsive to them.

Trieste was thus, for young Svevo, both a physical and a spiritual entity. Among the aspects of Svevo's work that Joyce later valued was his ability to use his native city as an integral part of his fiction's thematic structure. The admiration was mutual. As his Berlitz School English teacher, Joyce read to Svevo, his much older pupil, a story from *Dubliners* that he had recently completed. Both writers, in different ways and contexts, mythologized their native cities, raising them to the level of poetic topos and protagonist.

Elio's *Diario* reveals how profound the two brothers' attachment to Trieste really was. Ever since their childhood, they referred lovingly and possessively to "la mia bella Trieste." Exiled to school in Germany, they experienced a poignant nostalgia often associated with the image of trains that, they felt, must all lead to Trieste. The sense of exile became particularly painful in later years, when Elio, for reasons of business and health, had to leave Trieste for Cairo and wrote that he cried like a child, exactly as he did when he and Ettore left for Segnitz.

Yet that love was ambivalent. Elio repeatedly mourns over Trieste's comedown, over its subservience to material interests that brings its business needs into unavoidable conflict with its patriotic idealism. A rift between commercial aspirations and irredentist yearnings corresponds to a deeper political rift between the Austrian and the Italian side of the Triestine mentality. This crisis of conscience is not limited to Trieste, however. It may not be an exaggeration to say that Trieste, in Svevian terms, stands for a more pervasive malaise, or even sickness of the European bourgeois conscience, and that the diagnostic and prognostic aspects of his work point to a calamitous future. *La coscienza di Zeno*, Svevo's novel about "consciousness" and "conscience" written in the wake of World War I, concludes revealingly with the image of an apocalyptic man-made explosion that marks the end of human life on this globe.

Though essentially private and centered on family matters, Elio's *Diario* provides a political *basso continuo*. Much of this still has to do with the home atmosphere, for his family, like many other Triestine business families, was divided over the question of irredentism. Uncle Vito felt committed to the Italian destiny of Trieste, while Ettore and Elio's father had strong Austrian sympathies. Elio remembers arguments between these two over the outcome of the Franco-Prussian War. His father predictably took the side of the Prussians,

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asserting that they would soon be in Paris. 1870, the year of the Prussian victory, seems indeed to be a key date in Elio's political memory. This childhood point of reference is of particular interest if one considers that the opening page of *La coscienza di Zeno*, written some forty years later, associates the date of 1870 with Austria and the memory of the first cigarettes Zeno smoked—the beginning of a lifelong "vice" from which he would never free himself.

The family's division over allegiance to Austria or to Italy is not surprising. Many Triestine business people dealt primarily with Austria or were employed by Austrian firms. Business interests and family values were enmeshed. The business community prized solidity and solvency over idealistic rhetoric. Its symbol was the strongbox (*"cassa forte"*) and its measure of accomplishment the acquisition of wealth or, at the very least, gainful employment. Business metaphors informed everyday conversation and even found their way, naturally though often humorously, into the style of Elio's diary. There is talk of a promissory note (*"obligazione"* [*sic*]) signed by Ettore, committing himself vis-à-vis his brother to complete his play *Ariosto governatore* by a given date. (The play never got beyond its initial stages.) A few weeks later, Ettore signed five bills of exchange (*"cambiali"*) engaging himself to complete the five acts of a new comedy with a deadline of twenty days each. The signed bills and promissory notes anticipate the motif of the repeatedly postponed last cigarette and clearly indicate how early, in Svevo's case, the image of a transaction and the notion of a transgressed deadline are related to the act of writing.

Typically, the brothers also rebel against the business mentality associated with Trieste. Elio complains that money mania (*"denaromania"*) clashes with lofty dreams. The conflict is not abstract for the two would-be artists. The ethos of commerce embodied by their father signified a philistine hostility to any artistic activity that endangered the "seriousness" of purpose befitting young men. Elio aspires to be a musician and a composer. In a most interesting image of a parallel sacrifice involving politics, survival, and dreams of artistic creativity, the violin plays a symbolic role. "Trieste is going from bad to worse, which is precisely my situation. The city must sacrifice its nationality for the sake of commerce, just as I must sacrifice the violin to earning money" (*". . . io devo sagrificare* [*sic*] *il violino al guadagno"*). The violin is not an empty image. It was one thing to have a subscription to the theater and quite another to aim at an artistic career. Elio notes laconically that his father dismissed the violin teacher.

The Schmitz family, like most Jewish families, encouraged sentimental values. Elio and Ettore grew up with the cult of the living and the dead. Births and deaths were celebrated with great emotion. The deceased were not allowed to be forgotten. Month after month, year after year, the brothers evoke the memory of Uncle Vito and visit the grave of their sister Noemi. But the dominant values were Mitteleuropa "bourgeois": aversion to idleness *(ozio)*, obsession with "health" both physical and social, preoccupation with illness as "disorder," addiction to cures and thermal resorts, respect for doctors, law, and order. Typically again, even though Elio rebels against materialism, claiming that money desecrates all noble causes, he nonetheless subscribes on almost every page of his diary to the articles of faith of his milieu. Much like Svevo's later fictional work, the diary is constantly astride a critique and an apologia of the bourgeoisie. To be "healthy" *("essere un uomo sano")* is of course a perfectly legitimate desire on the part of one afflicted with a severe form of nephritis, but the ambition is also symbolic and ironic. The role of doctors appears as significantly ambivalent: enjoying a power and a prestige largely grounded in their patients' fears, they are also—to the extent that they constitute a guild protecting one another's ignorance—the butt of resentment and caricature.

Over this family world enfolded in the larger world of Triestino Jewish business families, Ettore and Elio's father looms as a heavy presence, both oppressive and repressive. Resenting his son's illness and the expenses it entailed, sacrificing everything to business concerns, increasingly depressed over money matters, Francesco Schmitz is moreover revealed to be commercially inept, a prisoner of outdated methods. Yet the son feels the constant need to justify himself in the eyes of his father, even within the privacy of his own thoughts. And what is true of Elio is also true of Svevo and of his fictional world. He will

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accept and internalize the very values he questions and denies. Schmitz/Svevo's life and fiction (hence the importance of the word *coscienza* in his most famous title) displays a consciousness unresolvedly polarized between the exigencies of the "artist" and those of the "businessman."

Reflecting or anticipating Ettore's way of thinking, the brother's diary provides a curious mirror image, though it is not always clear who the beholder of the mirror is. Elio, age sixteen, writes: "Ettore is now 18 years old. He is something of a poet, and it seems that he has much talent. He writes verse." Over the next few years, the diary reveals Ettore's basic character traits. He is moody, secretive, distracted, often apathetic in appearance, but these are deceptive signs hiding an intense inner life. He can be a prankster, but most often he is described by Elio in the act of reading or writing. He uses all his savings to buy books, and he resists his father's strict injunction not to read at night. (Elio even claims that if Ettore has one shoulder higher than the other, it is because of prolonged periods of reading.) At school, his predilection went to German literature, and he proclaimed the superiority of Schiller over all other literary geniuses. He read Shakespeare in a German translation, knew *Hamlet* by heart, and was haunted by the famous lines about being or not being. But his greatest exaltation seems to have come earlier, from secretly reading all the French novels he could get hold of.

To achieve literary fame was Ettore's *ideé fixe,* and in his dreams of literary glory he first turned to drama—a genre for which he had little talent. Much like Stendhal, he discovered in time that his mind was essentially averse to theatrical structures, which left little room for polyvalence and elusive strategies. In quick succession, to the amazement and dismay of his brother, he began and abandoned a number of theatrical projects: "Ariosto governatore," "Il Primo amore," "Le roi est mort, vive le roi," "I due poeti"—these are just some of the titles. After a while, his admiring brother almost lost faith in him. The diary, at a certain point, is studded with remarks such as: "I don't know whether he'll complete it," "He won't finish this one either," "This one too will end up in the fire."

Elio's worries go beyond the immediate present; they point to fundamental problems of his brother's literary temperament. Procrastination, changes in direction, and discouragement were to afflict him throughout the years. Yet there was also the stubborn will to write, even if resolutions, like Zeno's famous last cigarette, led from postponement to postponement. The link between "smoke" (*"il fumo"*) and literary determination is symptomatic as well as symbolic. Hence the promissory notes he cannot honor, and the further commitment that if he does not finish the play by a given day, he is to pay his brother over three whole months ten *soldi* for every cigarette he smokes. A chain of smoke firmly links Elio's portrait of young Ettore Schmitz to the anti-hero of Svevo's great novel written forty years later.

For Ettore's flaws lead to his literary eureka, after which point his weaknesses are transformed into artistic virtues. On February 24, 1881, barely nineteen years old, he declares to his brother, without elaborating: "I think I have found my subject, it is called *The Modern Flaw.*" The anti-heroic note struck by the title, *difetto moderno,* is contextually stressed, in the previous sentence, by the observation that his shoulder "defect" (*"difetto"*) attributed to excessive reading, has exempted him from military service. There follows an entry in Svevo's hand dealing exclusively with his shortcomings as a would-be writer. He blushes at his misconceptions, abstruseness, ugly style, hackneyed sentences. This exercise in self-criticism and despondency corresponds to a "negative" moving force that will lead up to three major novels whose titles are in themselves revealing: "L'Inetto" (The inept one—a title his publisher forced him to change to *Una Vita*), *Senilità,* and *La coscienza di Zeno.*

If the *Diario* provides a mirror image for Elio's private use, it is also a mirror in which Ettore could observe himself. His own entries make clear that he read his brother's entries on a regular basis. After his brother died, he kept his diary as an intimate belonging. His wife Livia's testimonial is categorical. He not only treated it as a cherished relic, but more precisely "mirrored himself" (*"si rispecchiava"*) in the consciousness of the irreplaceable witness who had been the confidant of his literary dreams and had believed in his destiny as a writer. This belief in his glorious future must have sustained Svevo, though he

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must also have been amused, to say the least, by Elio comparing himself to an admiring historian of Napoleon, especially since Napoleon stood as the very embodiment of careerism and decisive action. Allusions to Napoleon, in fact, appear repeatedly in Svevo's writings, usually as ironic signals of an impossible or undesirable heroic model.

The parodic and deflating mood, so characteristic of Svevo's work, already informs his own entries in the *Diario,* most particularly in the severe, self-deprecatory analyses in which he indulges. He makes fun of the *"grandi destini"* to which the diary seems dedicated. Even banal episodes are debunked. He mocks his glib flirtation with a young actress. But even this mockery, in dialogue form, remains characteristically incomplete, confirming Elio's complaint that he cannot ever finish anything.

The mirror also functions in reverse, so to speak. As Ettore reads Elio's diary, he sharpens his perspective on his brother. This perspective has a triple dimension: what he knows from daily contact, what he gathers as a reader-participant, what he understands posthumously as he remembers, or re-reads, this personal record in conjunction with his own activities as novelist. It appears very likely indeed that Elio's character traits were an important literary inspiration for Svevo after his brother's death and that he used his brother as a model for some of his most memorable characters: Alfonso Nitti, Emilio Brentani, and Zeno Cosini. Certain psychological tensions and themes dear to Svevo are clearly prefigured in Elio's account of himself: the permanent awareness of the conflict between the world of art and the world of commerce; a sense of frustration, melancholy, and self-doubt; the obsession with aging, disease, and death; the relationship between illness, irony, and renunciation; the refuge in illness and the corresponding fear of life; and, above all, an underlying sense of destiny as failure.

In a sense, Elio welcomed his illness. It became an alibi for his dedication to art as well as a justification for failure. Seeking refuge in inertia, he radicalized his passivity. One is reminded of Sartre's diagnosis of young Flaubert adopting a posthumous stance. Hence the irony of the patient waiting for a cure in which he does not really want to believe. Svevo as novelist was to develop at length this sense of the great sweetness of defeat. Zeno resists the cure in large part because he discovers that so-called health is the real disease.

In his brother's diary, Ettore could read contradictory signals. There was the guilt of self-blame that came from seeing his inadequacies with his father's eyes; he accepted his milieu's severe judgment of the "idler" and "good-for-nothing." He shudders at the thought of becoming a *"vizioso"* or an *"uomo da nulla."* Writing was indeed seen by Elio as a form of death, associated with a morbid cult of memories and a disbelief in the future. Revealingly, he has the family carpenter build a "box," which is to become the coffin-like repository of his diary and his letters. Yet the act of writing is also seen as futile. Elio refers disparagingly to the silly scribblings (*sciocchezze*") that fill his useless notebook *(inutile libraccio).*

As he re-read his brother's notebook, Svevo must surely have empathized with the steadily felt tension between unattainable idealism and despondency. Elio's diary plays variations on the themes of self-improvement, moral purpose, gratuitous love of art, elevation through creative effort. Yet concomitantly with the search of a secret dimension, rooted in the sense of precious selfhood, there is a conviction that things can only go from bad to worse and a cruel capacity to see oneself as inferior to others. Filled with self-pity, Elio is moreover a constant reminder of the "unfairness" of life. Only Svevo, having reached maturity and become resigned to the unpredictable fluctuations of existence, will translate this "unfairness" into a paradoxical and ludic notion of the "originality" of life.

Svevo must also have savored the bittersweet melancholy (*"dolce malinconia"*) that ironically sets Elio's inner fog against the sunny land-and-seascape of Trieste. In his novels, but perhaps nowhere more masterfully than in *Senilità*, Svevo will continually exploit the ironic gap between the subjective reality of his protagonists and the objective reality of the city, associating sickness and pain with the poetic evocation of his native Trieste.

This sense of lucidity about one's powerlessness and blind spots, this immersion in passivity and conviction (or hope) that life chooses for us, this quest for that which one

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does not really desire, will take complex and resilient shapes in the fictional work of Svevo. The uses of the brother's diary are revealing because the specific artistic elaboration, with its multiple instabilities, indirections, humorous obliquities, and self-defensive *Witz*, or ironic jokes, allows him to convey much that is not directly stated. To write, Svevo believed, is to try to get to the heart of one's complicated being. But he knew that only the "lies" of fiction could reach that heart, and that self-deceit was his truth. This may explain why his form of narrative remains so close to the confessional and autobiographic urge.

Elio's *Diario* makes explicit the many kinds of malaise that were to afflict Svevo during his life, among which his Jewishness was not the least disturbing to him. And related to it there was also the malaise of being a multiple outsider: as a Jew and a Hapsburgian subject in an Adriatic city that yearned overwhelmingly to be united with Italy, as a writer whose native idiom was the Triestino dialect but who strove to write in a literary language not his own. This linguistic alienation ultimately became for Svevo the very condition of the writer. Zeno's observation that "we lie with every word we speak in the Tuscan tongue" held for him a universal meaning, signifying the gap between spoken and literary language and, even more profoundly, the gap between any language and the constant mobility of our consciousness.

Much more than Proust to whom his early critics compared him, it is Kafka who comes to mind in connection with Italo Svevo. Like Kafka, always anticipating the worst, Svevo knows the humor of despair. For Svevo, too, writing was a form of non-living: a necessity as well as a form of salvation. "Only in the pen is there salvation," he asserted in his private notes. Yet he was equally convinced that literature is a derisible, futile, and even harmful activity (*"ridicola e dannosa"*). All of this was to be played out, with variations, in the constant shuttle between his life and his work. But in the destiny of his brother, who died so young with so many unfulfilled hopes, he could read what he himself described as a "Schopenhauerian" affirmation of life intimately bound up with its negation.

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Haircut

ERIC FRIDMAN

Jay's Barbershop in Evanston, Illinois, stands in the center of a row of weathered brick storefronts that, since they were built more than a century ago, have come to assume that aspect of dispirited resilience so prevalent throughout midwestern America. A faded maroon awning stretches out over the sidewalk and storefront window, upon which the owner's name is stenciled, with the *y* painted by hand to resemble a pair of barber's shears. This same block includes, on either side of the barbershop, a used-book store and a T-shirt printing company. During the four years I've been going to Jay's for my haircuts, I've never once seen anyone enter or leave either the bookstore or the T-shirt company. The barbershop, on the other hand, does such a good business these days that it's almost impossible to get in without an appointment, especially on the weekends.

If the success of Jay's Barbershop seems surprising, that's because it flies in the face of developments that are slowly but inexorably transforming the economics of the barbering profession. Traditional three- and four-chair shops like Jay's, which over the last century and a half have grown into reasonably profitable businesses by offering haircuts and shaves at reasonable prices, are becoming an increasingly rare commodity. (The National Association of Barber Styling Schools, which tracks such statistics, reports that between 1972 and 1990 the number of barbershops in this country fell from 108,279 to 62,507, while the number of registered barbers declined from 288,836 to 180,668.) As a result, barbering in America—at least as it used to be practiced some twenty or thirty years ago—appears to be on its way to becoming a forgotten art. The reason for this development is not hard to find. Large chains of slick, chicly appointed and nationally promoted haircutting franchises are threatening to drive the neighborhood barbershop into extinction. What's more, all of this is happening at a time when demand for the kind of personalized service barbershops provide may be about to begin growing once again—ironically, in response to dissatisfaction with the service provided by the very same chains that threaten the barbershop's continued existence.

How we think about barbers—how we view them and what kinds of services we expect them to provide—is of course closely tied to how we think about hair. Human hair—and the hair of the scalp in particular—has always served as a subtle, though infinitely complex cultural symbol. Its significance through the ages has been public as well as private, social as well as economic, political as well as religious. In part this is because of the almost universal belief that the human head serves as home to the soul and, consequently, as the wellspring of personal identity. When meeting a man for the first time, one of the first clues we're likely to pick up about his personality comes from the style of his hair. Long or short, combed or disheveled, washed or oily, the condition and style of a man's hair offer valuable information about his social class, political allegiance, the extent of his vanity, and, in some cases, even his religious affiliation. In addition, popular folklore tells us that there is a direct relation between the color of a man's hair and his emotional temperament, with red hair signaling a fiery, mercurial personality at one extreme, and blond hair a cooler, more analytical disposition at the other.

✪ ERIC FRIDMAN is a marketing director for a telecommunications firm.

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Our understanding of the significance of human hair is further reflected through the language we use. The anthropologist Raymond Firth notes that expressions such as *hairline, hair-trigger, hairsplitting,* and *hairsbreadth* indicate an association between hair and precision of measurement that dates at least as far back as the New Testament. The word *hair* often carries with it a sense of life lived beyond the pale of civilized society—as, for example, when we use the adjective *hairy* to characterize a wild, potentially dangerous situation over which we have no control, or when we use the expression *hair shirt* to describe the primitive deprivation and discomfort associated with penitential suffering. These last two illustrations remind us that we have come to view our hair, or more specifically our lack of hair, as an important point of social distinction between ourselves and the other less-developed, less-civilized animals. Over the centuries we have honed this distinction to an even keener edge by training ourselves to wash and style what little hair we do possess.

In early culture man's obsession with his own hair took a decidedly metaphysical bent. The belief persisted among several primitive societies in the South Pacific that violence done to a tribal member's hair after cutting would inevitably result in similar violence being perpetrated upon the hair's owner—a belief that continues today among Caribbean practitioners of voodoo. In *The Golden Bough,* Sir James Frazier describes how an Australian aborigine who wanted to get rid of his wife would cut a lock of her hair, tie it to his spear, and give the spear to a friend in a neighboring village. The accomplice would then stand the spear up every night before his tribal fire; when the spear fell over, the wife was believed to have died. Other early societies regarded a man's head as host to a variety of powerful deities, malicious as well as benign. On the Fiji Islands, the chief of the Namosi tribe always killed and devoured a man selected from a neighboring tribe to preclude any evil consequences that might result from his imminent barbering. Elsewhere, among the Maoris of New Zealand, spells and prayers were recited during haircutting ceremonies to consecrate the obsidian blade used in the shearing, and to avert the thunder and lightning believed to be caused by violation of the spirit's human habitat. When such natural marvels occurred after a haircutting session, both barber and barbered were immediately tabooed and remained so until the barber rubbed his hands with potato or fern root that had been painstakingly cooked over a sacred tribal fire.

In our own society, the professional status of barbers has more to do with health and fashion than with magic and witchcraft. On the one hand, barbers attend to our hygienic needs, clipping and trimming excessively long hair as a sanitary precaution. On the other, they serve as purveyors of fashion, sculptors whose scissorly skills have enabled men of all ages and cultures to create a unique sense of their own personal identities.

Barbers were in fact regarded as medical practitioners throughout much of the Middle Ages, specifically after 1163, the year in which Pope Alexander III forbade the Roman clergy to shed blood. Before this time, monks had been performing all sorts of minor surgery upon one another, including periodic bloodletting, which they were required to undergo at regular intervals. After Alexander's decree, however, this task—along with other medical chores such as the lancing of abscesses and the cleansing of wounds—devolved to the monastic barbers. These new responsibilities brought with them unanticipated status and professional recognition. George Frideric Handel's father was a barber, and an immensely successful one. In France, Charles VI proclaimed that "the king's first barber and valet" was to be considered chief of all barbers and surgeons in the kingdom. So, too, in England, where barbers and surgeons formed a single, unified trade guild in 1462. It wasn't until 1745 that British surgeons, perhaps feeling the need to distinguish themselves from (in their eyes) their less sophisticated colleagues, broke off to form their own professional association. Traces of this early connection between barbers and surgeons live on in that ubiquitous emblem of the barbering profession, the barber's pole, whose red and white stripes (now often corrupted in the United States to red, white, and blue stripes) represent the blood medieval barbers let and the bandages they applied afterwards to the wound.

From Asia to South America, the barber's pole has managed to survive as the most visible icon of the haircutting profession and as an international emblem of male grooming.

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For some men it also carries profound personal associations. In my own catalogue of childhood memories, the barber's pole serves as a poignant symbol, the sight of which conjures up early recollections of the barbershop my father went to in a working-class suburb of Cleveland. The place was called Pat and Mike's after the two affable, hirsute, not Irish but Italian owners who dispensed a continuous ramble of social philosophy and political analysis along with their dollar-and-seventy-five-cent haircuts and fifty-cent shaves. What I recall most about my early visits to Pat and Mike's, however, are not so much the owners themselves as the reek of stale cigar smoke, the slap of straight razors against leather sharpening strops, and the glint of chrome ashtrays placed next to each waiting chair. I remember also the magazines in the shop: *Field and Stream*, *Outdoor Life*, *Argosy*, and an occasional *Police Gazette*, all of which offered intimate, sometimes lurid glimpses into the mysterious, exotic world of older men. Now, thirty years later, I've come to realize that my visits to Pat and Mike's provided me with my earliest clues about how grown-up men ought to look, speak, and act—how they ought to spend their leisure time, how they ought to regard women, what kinds of jokes they ought to tell. As an impressionable boy of five or six, I revered the men who gathered at this barbershop on Saturday mornings and mimicked their easy laughter and self-confident gestures. Once in a while I still meet such men today, usually in the course of my business dealings, and whenever I do, I regard them with the same peculiar mixture of admiration and awe I felt as a child.

The fact that barbershops have until recently been considered exclusively male domains, sanctuaries for men seeking refuge and safe haven among their own, undoubtedly grew out of the early role barbershops played as centers for the exchange of local gossip and opinion in ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome. There have always been powerful cultural associations, in both the East and the West, between the cutting of hair and male rights of initiation. The *Apatouria*, celebrated in a number of Ionian Greek cities during the sixth century B.C., was a three-day civic festival that included a feast during the first day and a ritualistic throat slitting of sacrificial animals on the second. On the third day the initiates drank a toast to Heracles before cutting a tuft of their hair and offering it as tribute to Zeus or Athena. Even today the association between haircutting and the initiation of young boys into the mysteries of adulthood lives on in various parts of the world. In certain regions of India and Indochina, a boy's head is shaved when he reaches his first month and again upon reaching puberty—first to celebrate his passage into life, and later into manhood.

While the formal associations between barbering and coming of age have all but disappeared in our own culture, the experience of visiting the neighborhood barbershop remains a ritual full of social significance for males of all ages. In a world in which the personal relationships that serve to define us as members of a common society are becoming increasingly evanescent, periodic visits to the barbershop offer us a brief opportunity to re-establish ties with the community in which we live. Socializing at the barbershop is one way of reconfirming our place in the world, both within masculine society and the community at large. The very act of paying voluntarily for a haircut indicates our tacit consent to abide by the rules of society, which for the most part condemn long, unkempt hair as a sign of non-compliance and social rebellion.

There is also a more personal, psychological dimension to barbershop visits. The repetition of the barbering ritual every two or three weeks not only allows us to renew contact with our community, it also provides us with an opportunity to gain some measure of how our lives have changed or remained the same over the years. Recently, the experience of watching a young mother accompany her teary-eyed son to the barber's chair for his first haircut caused me to recall the anxiety I felt in the same situation decades before. It wasn't the haircut itself that frightened me as much as the prospect of being abandoned to a world with which I was entirely unfamiliar. As I grew older, this fear dissipated; during my grade-school years, going to the barber became more of an irritant, an inconvenient disruption (inevitably on Saturdays) of my cluttered social agenda. By the time I reached sixteen or seventeen, this pique had transformed itself into a universal contempt for barbers and their craft. On those rare occasions when my mother demanded I get a haircut, I slunk surreptitiously in and out of the barbershop to avoid being seen by friends.

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Afterwards I felt a little like Sampson must have felt—betrayed by a woman, the source of my strength and identity now scattered in ringlets across the barbershop floor.

Today all this has changed once again. I now look forward to my trips to the barber and to fraternizing with the other customers who live in my neighborhood. Like other traditional barbershops, Jay's is modestly furnished and functional throughout. Three barber's chairs, four or five waiting chairs, a magazine rack, a small table on which lay still more magazines and newspapers, and a television set constitute the shop's decor. A glass shelf above the long, room-length mirror holds a full selection of brushes, combs, bay-rum-scented oils, styling gels, and hair sprays, though the inventory rarely, if ever, turns over. In a corner, near the front window, stands an antique-brass cash register, and overhead hangs the only personal memento my barber has chosen to display in his shop—a framed photograph of the mayor of Chicago presiding over a local parish celebration, wearing a ceremonial red sash and holding my barber's four-year-old son in his arms.

Since I've been visiting the same barber once or twice a month for more than four years, you would think that I would have gotten to know him quite well by now. In fact, I know very little about Jay. I've learned that he is of Yugoslavian descent and that he is married to an Italian woman. I know that he lives about fifteen miles or so from his shop, at the other end of the Chicago lakeshore, in the same working-class neighborhood as Chicago's mayor. I also know he has been in the same shop for twenty-five years, and that he worked for the previous owner for five years as an apprentice before buying the shop to run on his own. Finally, I know that he loves to play golf, and that once a year he and his family have their vacation with friends on the southwestern coast of Florida, only a few miles from where my parents, retired, now live.

That's all I've been able to piece together. My barber is a private man, not easily given to talking with customers about himself or his family. Which is not to say that he can't carry on a spirited, well-informed conversation. Given the chance, he will opine knowledgeably about a wide variety of topics—sports, international affairs, and local politics among them—but rarely does he say much about his personal life. Nor, I've noticed, do his customers press him for details. It's a discretion I have come to appreciate and respect, since I myself am not easily given to personal disclosure, especially to those with whom I'm not particularly close.

I patronize Jay's Barbershop first out of convenience (it's only a few blocks from where I live), and second because it reminds me of every other barbershop in which I have ever set foot—a fact that, in its own small way, helps me to maintain some sense of the continuity and coherence of my life. Barbershops have of course changed since my visits to Pat and Mike's: instead of *Outdoor Life, Field and Stream,* and *Argosy,* customers waiting their turn in Jay's chair browse through *People, Us, Golf Digest,* and *North Shore.* The leather strops have disappeared—in an era of disposable razor blades and microprocessor-controlled electronic shavers, demand for barbershop shaves is virtually nonexistent. The chrome ashtrays, too, are gone, banished by fiat of city law. But without a doubt the biggest change of all has been a barber named Betty, an accomplished haircutter and raconteur who has been working with Jay for years, and who contributes as much to the shop's congeniality as does the owner himself.

Barbershops are commercial enterprises; like other businesses, they must learn to adapt quickly to social and economic change in order to remain profitable. While the number of services barbershops provide has clearly decreased overall—most shops no longer offer shaves, hot towels, or even the shoe shines they once did years ago—the quality of service they do provide appears to be as good as it has ever been, probably in part because of increasing competition from the larger national haircutting chains. Eventually, however, this competition may prove to be overwhelming. The economic clout that the national chains have been able to exercise—particularly in the form of million-dollar advertising campaigns and promotional budgets—has made it increasingly difficult for the neighborhood barbershop to survive. Unable to match the considerable money the chains are spending on newspaper, radio, and television advertising, many barbershops, finding it impossible to compete, are closing their doors.

Advertising budgets aside, there are two major reasons for the rapid increase in popu-

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larity of the national chains. First, American consumers generally favor any business that can provide a service more expeditiously than its competition. One-hour photo processing and twenty-minute automobile oil change shops are two good examples of businesses whose success has been based almost exclusively on this fundamental marketing principle. The haircutting chains, too, have learned this lesson well; if they have demonstrated anything, it is an ability to process their customers, once in the chair, with a degree of dispatch that smaller shops cannot hope to equal.

The other reason for the chains' success has to do with the general blurring of social distinctions between men and women that is one of the legacies of the 1970s feminist movement. For the last twenty-five years, hairstyles for men and women have become more or less interchangeable, with men generally wearing their hair longer, and women their hair shorter, than they have in the past. Virtually all of the new haircutting franchise chains offer unisex service, and they promote this feature aggressively in their advertising as a competitive advantage. In the end, the convenience these chains offer to men (and women), coupled with the efficiency of service they claim to provide, makes them in certain ways an attractive alternative to the traditional, less efficient neighborhood barbershop.

With the economic cards apparently stacked in favor of the national chains, what, then, does the future hold for the American barbershop? There are at least three possibilities. The first is that the number of barbershops will continue to decline, year after year, until they disappear entirely. This is an unlikely possibility, since there will always be some demand for the kind of services traditional barbershops provide. At the very least barbershops will continue to exist, and in many cases prosper, throughout rural America and in towns too small to support an outpost of one of the national chains. As such, barbershops would join the ranks of roadside diners, general stores, and gas station garages that continue to provide this country's less populated areas with services necessary for day-to-day living. Barbershops would continue to play the same role they have always played: they would provide their rural customers with moderately priced haircuts and a social forum for the exchange of local information. Their numbers would dwindle, but enough would survive to serve as a quaint reminder of how men's hair used to be cut in an earlier age.

A second possibility involves the metamorphosis of the barbershop into a new institution, one that caters to the needs of women as well as men. There is evidence that more women are beginning to view barbershops as an alternative to the traditional beauty salon; even at Jay's, I have been present when women—usually teenagers or younger women—have stopped by on their own or with parents for a haircut. For the most part, however, it seems that women over twenty-one continue to regard barbershops as an exclusively male domain. It's also true that beauty salons play an important social role for women analogous to the role barbershops play for men, and for this reason women will likely prove reluctant to trade the custom of the beauty salon for the more unfamiliar territory of the barbershop. In short, this second possibility assumes a more extensive melding of the sexes than has yet occurred, or perhaps even than is likely to occur in this country, at least for the next few decades.

The third possibility (and to my mind the most likely of the three) is that the barbershop will regenerate itself as an institution that caters primarily to men—not only in sparsely populated rural areas, but throughout our towns and large cities. Should it occur, this rebirth may come in part as a reaction against the impersonal, mechanical service provided by the national chains. Most people appreciate the convenience of having their color film developed in an hour, or the oil in their cars changed in a matter of minutes, yet the quality of certain services suffers irreparably when efficiency of production becomes the central consideration. This is especially true with services that traditionally have involved a high degree of social interchange between purveyor and consumer. In such cases, the social consequences (as distinguished from the purely economic rewards) can be significant, if unanticipated. The advent of fast food restaurants is one example that comes to mind: consider the unexpected transformation in family dynamics that has occurred over the last two decades from, among other causes, the immediate availability of food on demand outside the home.

With the advent of national haircutting fran-

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chises, barbering, I would argue, potentially falls into this same category of service. The barbershop is a commercial enterprise, but, at its best, it is also a social institution. As such, the quality of a haircut *as a social experience* can only degenerate when shop owners begin to attach more importance to the number of customers served than to the caliber of service provided.

Another, perhaps more significant reason barbershops may well regain their former popularity among men is the renewed interest, evident over the last three or four years, in activities and institutions that are peculiarly male—witness the increasing popularity of men's fashion catalogues, of magazines and organizations devoted exclusively to men's legal and political issues, and now even of men's "support" groups. This new preoccupation with male identity and tradition seems to be in part a defensive reflex, a reaction against feminism and its disproportionate concern with women's problems and concerns. It is nonetheless a real phenomenon and reflects a growing desire on the part of men to distinguish themselves, through their own activities and institutions, from their female counterparts.

The extraordinary success of a recent book by poet Robert Bly suggests that public interest in specifically masculine psychology and social ritual is currently running at an all-time high in this country. In *Iron John: A Book About Men*, Bly argues that the Industrial Revolution has dramatically transformed the way male children are raised in the West; he maintains that because most fathers now work away from home, in factories or in offices, male children have over the last two hundred years been deprived of a crucial relationship with those older men (their fathers) who traditionally were responsible for initiating them into a spiritual understanding of the world and its ways. The consequences of this deprivation for these children, Bly believes, are both manifold and tragic—they include widespread drug addiction, chronic depression, ruinous marriages, unstable families, and perversely misguided economic and political priorities. *Iron John* in large part outlines a prescription for curing this illness of deprivation, a prescription that in one sense can be understood as a call for new initiatory rites that will enable men to live more satisfying, more fulfilling lives. Within weeks of its publication, *Iron John* jumped to the top of the *New York Times* best-seller list.

If barbershops play an important role in the process whereby boys are transformed into men, and men, once transformed, maintain relationships with their fellow men, it is quite possible that men may be about to rediscover the pleasures and satisfactions of the barbershop as they search for new (or attempt to resurrect old) ways of re-establishing contact with specifically masculine traditions and experiences. There are, to be sure, not many of the old masculine ways left. The ready availability of food and the refinement of the science of food preservation have transformed hunting, which used to offer men frequent opportunities for fraternal camaraderie, from a stark necessity of life into a quaint archaism. Attendance at and participation in public sporting events, which once gave men the chance to enjoy the company of other men and to join together in support of common pleasures, have in large part given way to solitary viewing in front of the television set. Even the nature of warfare, which historically provided perhaps the most rigorous ground for the development and testing of masculine character, now has been dehumanized and automated into a series of computer calculations and push-button commands. The barbershop may provide one of the last remaining (and one of the most accessible) avenues for rekindling the male spirit and mythology that Bly argues has all but disappeared from our modern industrialized world.

The number of barbershops will probably continue to fall slowly in the years ahead, mostly through attrition (the National Association of Barber Styling Schools reports that the number of barber students has dropped off sharply over the last two decades), but for those shops able to survive the marketing muscle of the franchise chains, business should remain stable, with the real possibility of an increase in demand. Whether this renaissance will occur during the next five or the next twenty-five years is hard to say. I do know, however, that Jay's barbershop has more business than it can possibly manage, at least with two barbers working weekdays and a third on Saturdays. Jay attributes the growth of his business over the years to simple virtues, such as remembering the names of his customers and accommodating the occasional

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special request. Yet the success of Jay's Barbershop is more than a testimony to the skills and courtesies of its owner. It also bears witness to the barbershop's importance as a ritual place where the private and public concerns of men conjoin to create an experience of psychological comfort, social significance, and simple masculine pleasure.

Condolences

(*Tennyson after the death of Thackeray*)

PAUL PETRIE

The tall man in the Spanish cloak is standing
outside the window, silent, without a word,
and the snow is falling upon his broad-brimmed hat.

Inside, the daughters sit in the darkening parlor,
absorbed in their griefs, watching the tall man's hat
fill up with snow, and mourning their father's death.

Snow covers the tall man's boots, white crests his shoulders,
entangles his shaggy beard, until he seems
some snowman they made as children, still standing there.

In the room, the snow falls on the women's hair.
Unmarried still, they are mourning the loss of love,
while the flakes drift down, filling up the empty house.

The tall man will not come in. A man of words
he will not speak—but only stand there silent,
letting the snowflakes cover him up with white.

And the women inside will not stir from their chairs,
but only watch the snow, falling in and out,

till all is hid, till everything is said.

✪ PAUL PETRIE is the author of *Not Seeing Is Believing* and *Strange Gravity*.

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The Perfect Transparency of the Artist

MARGARET HOLLEY

Renoir at seventy-one
was lifted out of his wheelchair
to try to take a few steps:

"It takes *all* of my strength,"
he said, "I would much rather paint,"
and never walked again.

To his gnarled stump of a hand
he had the brush tied
and pulled its long hairs gently

through iridescent pools
of pigment and turpentine, turning
every reason to be bitter

and hate life—a stupid war
tearing into his sons' sweet bodies,
their mother, beloved Aline,

the girl with the puppy, gone,
and he, an old cripple and connoisseur
of pain, its knives

carving out every gesture
—into shimmering shapes, saying of this
condition, I am woman's flesh,

a child's face, I am peaches, water,
blue jewels of light, Venus, I am
love victorious.

✪ MARGARET HOLLEY is the author of *The Poetry of Marianne Moore: A Study in Voice and Value* and two chapbooks of poems, *The Dark Horses* and *The Mayflower*. Her poems have appeared most recently in *Poetry* and *Michigan Quarterly Review*, and are forthcoming in the *Southern Review* and the *Nation*.

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MEMOIR

An Innocent Abroad

My Father's Diary

DANIEL A. REZNECK

My father, Samuel Rezneck, was a professor of history at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He died in 1983. I recently discovered a diary he kept while traveling on a Harvard fellowship in the years 1919–20, some seventy years ago. It now has the dual character of an artifact from a vanished world and an uncanny forecast of things that took place in the intervening years.

My father came to the United States from Eastern Europe in 1908, at the age of eleven, speaking no English. His family settled in Fall River, Massachusetts, where he attended high school and received a scholarship to Harvard in 1915. At Harvard he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in his junior year and came under the intellectual influence of a gifted teacher—Harold J. Laski.

Laski, an Englishman who had come to Harvard in 1916, was only a few years older than his students, but in a short time he made a distinguished reputation for himself. He became a friend of Felix Frankfurter, then a professor at the Harvard Law School. Frankfurter introduced him to Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., who was more than fifty years his senior. Laski began a warm friendship and correspondence with the Justice that lasted until Holmes died.

Laski was a gadfly at Harvard, beloved by his students but reviled by some for his radicalism. He was a theorist of pluralism and an opponent of statism while at Harvard, publishing *Authority in the Modern State* in 1919. He became sympathetic with the cause of labor and, later in his career, turned to Marxism in the economic and political crisis of the 1930s. He became chairman of the British Labor Party and an intellectual leader of British socialism.

Upon graduation from Harvard College in 1919, my father received a traveling fellowship. He left for England in September 1919, armed with letters of introduction from Laski to some of the great names in the British academic world, particularly the group at the London School of Economics. The diary begins shortly before his departure from Boston during a memorable event in the city's history—the Boston police strike. He observed the strike at firsthand and wrote in the diary for September 9, 1919:

> The policemen struck today at 6:00 in the afternoon. It was a peculiar sight to see many of them going home half dressed in civilian garb, with their uniforms and helmets under their arm. Tomorrow we shall see what a city without police protection and traffic guidance looks like. The significance of this strike is greater than that of any other recent one. It attests to the instability of the present order. It requires only the collapse of the military power to have it crumble in the dust. Then what?

The next day, September 10, was the peak of the strike. The day culminated in Governor Calvin Coolidge's calling out the Massachusetts State Guard. Coolidge later made the statement that was to carry him to the vice-presidency in 1920 (and then to the presidency three years later): "There is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, any time."

✪ DANIEL A. REZNECK practices law in Washington, D.C. He writes frequently on legal and historical subjects and teaches at the Georgetown University Law Center.

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As my father's diary recounts the events of that day:

As a parting gift Boston has left me with a deep impression of a city in the throes of anarchy. True to their word, the policemen struck last night, and left the city unprotected for the night against the rowdyism of a populace let loose from all restraint.

The results of the night made a wonderful sight this morning. Stores by the score in all parts of the city had been broken into and wrecked, and presented a deplorable appearance in the morning with their shattered windows and disordered goods. Discount the newspaper accounts of the night's doings 90%, and you will still have sensational proof of the thinness of the veneer of our civilization, and of the inherent viciousness of even our ordinary man. All day long today the city was in an uproar. Gambling proceeded openly on all the streets—and whiskey was sold freely everywhere in spite of all prohibition.

My father's ship sailed for England the next day, leaving Boston in a "critical" state. "Militia and mob were engaging in open conflict, and the toll for the first clash was three dead and fifteen wounded." Harvard did not remain untouched by the disorders. Students volunteered as peace keepers or strike-breakers, depending on one's perspective. Laski, a vocal supporter of the strikers, most of them Irish and of the working-class, was denounced by many alumni, who called for his dismissal. President Lowell stood firm against these pressures. He was reported to have said: "If the overseers ask for Laski's resignation, they will get mine." But Laski left Harvard forever the next year.

The Laski connection, however controversial at Harvard, was a credit to my father in London. Through Laski, my father met Sidney Webb, founder with his wife, Beatrice, of the London School of Economics and pillar of the British Fabian Society. He dined with R. H. Tawney, the great economic historian and author in 1920 of *The Acquisitive Society* and later of *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*. He attended lectures at the London School by Graham Wallas (whose most famous work was *The Great Society*), G. D. H. Cole, and L. T. Hobhouse. It was in Hobhouse's class that my father had an "impromptu introduction" to Felix Frankfurter's sister, when he happened to sit beside her. He learned that she was "Radcliffe '17 and has taken a special course in factory management at Bryn Mawr, so that by all accounts she is no chicken and she looks all of 24–25 though not at all disagreeable in appearance." This from someone who was himself all of twenty-two.

London in that first year after the war was a cultural and intellectual feast for a young American. My father attended a lecture by George Bernard Shaw, who reminded him of Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts in both physical appearance and quickness of manner—a comparison that I suspect each man would have disavowed. Of Shaw he wrote in the diary:

He spoke presumably on Socialism and Ireland. While there was a lot about Ireland in his talk, there was little about Socialism. In fact, it was characteristically Shavian, embracing everything. Shaw has a facility of speech almost superhuman. And his wit is sparkling. It makes all his interest, because of serious common sense there is very little in him.

G. D. H. Cole spoke one evening on his favorite topic, Guild Socialism. My father commented:

He was disillusioning, and disclosed the flaws in his own case. His argument has been modified since he wrote his book. He has come to believe in the necessity of a catastrophic change from the capitalistic to the socialistic state, and he decried any dealing or compromising with capitalism. He, moreover, admitted that it was only a conscious minority which was aware of the benefits of Guild Socialism. It was, therefore, for this minority to assume the dictatorship and to force the inert masses into acquiescence and possibly into a later approval.

My father also attended talks by H. G. Wells and Bertrand Russell. He was particularly taken with Russell, whose opposition to the war had "stirred up so much opposition. He is a youngish looking man apparently of excellent health to judge from his ruddy complexion." (An accurate assessment, since Russell lived almost to the age of one hundred.) "His full head of gray hair looks rather odd on a man so young as he appears to be. What is most remarkable about this man is his extremely fluent and refined diction. He can make the most abstruse subject lucid by his easy command of language."

And there was much more. He heard Nellie

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Melba sing. He watched Anna Pavlova dance. He wrote that she "has a most wonderful agility of movement, and is light upon her feet in a magic way. The other dancers look awkward and clumsy beside her." He saw a performance of Shaw's *Pygmalion* starring Mrs. Patrick Campbell, the original Eliza Doolittle, for whom Shaw wrote the part. He found it full of "sparkling wit and brilliant language." On New Year's Eve of 1919, he was enthralled by another hit of the London stage—J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*.

London abounded in other spectacles for an American visitor. Britain, having survived the perils of the Great War, was near the apogee of its imperial power and splendor. Although few realized it, the sun was setting on the British Empire, but the glow still dazzled.

He attended debates in the House of Commons, then controlled by the Coalition Government that had brought Britain through the war. "It was an impressive sight to see the Big Five—Lloyd George, Balfour, Bonar Law, Austen Chamberlain, and Churchill side by side. One then had the full effect of what Cabinet government means." (Of the five men he saw that night on the Front Bench of the House of Commons, four had been, were, or would be prime ministers of Britain.) "Churchill delivered a sparkling speech full of satirical references to the opposition." Not everyone was so impressive. "The debate at times struck me as no more than a discussion of overgrown school children. The minor speakers spoke very foolishly and it seemed they were merely filling in the time."

Royalty was much in evidence. One diary entry reads:

> Saw the King of England and the Shah of Persia this afternoon. . . . The streets were lined with soldiers and police, and a crowd was gathered as if waiting for someone. We joined the crowd, and soon were rewarded with the sight of royalty. The outriders were magnificent in their scarlet liveries, dashing along in advance on fine horses. The whole thing was over in a minute and I scarce had a glimpse of the King. He is very slight with a rather refined and handsome countenance. The Shah is an "old woman." A stout man with a broad, moonlike face and very stupid eyes—for him all this fuss was being made. It was interesting to read the newspaper accounts of the visit—to make arrangements for the future relations to exist between the countries as if any arrangements have to be made. I am reminded strongly of Rome, sovereigns coming to pay homage to their master.

On another occasion King George V and Queen Mary had come to lay a foundation stone for a new building at the London School of Economics:

> Ceremony was elaborate, and never did I see such a gorgeous mass of colors as was represented by the scarlet gowns of many of those present. The trimmings were of many hues—brown, blue, cream, etc. . . . Tried to gauge psychology of the occasion, and feel that there is a good deal of the monarchical yet left in England.

Early in 1920 my father traveled to France for a period of study at the Sorbonne. It cost only thirty francs to enroll. There, as in England, he attended lectures by some of the academic notables of the day—Françoise Aulard on Voltaire and the French Revolution; Marc Bloch on the Ancien Regime; and a bearded professor, M. Bougle, who "constantly cast his eyes at one corner of the balcony. . . . I discovered that it was a fair young lady sitting by herself in one of the recesses of the balcony." He also made a pilgrimage to Montmorency to visit the house of Rousseau and from there dispatched a postcard to Irving Babbitt of Harvard, the scholar of *Rousseau and Romanticism*, published the previous year.

Mardi Gras in the Paris of 1920 was somewhat shocking to my father's American-educated sensibilities. His diary rather primly recounts:

> The Boulevards were packed tight with people. It was half dark as usual, but people didn't mind. As we crowded our way through we saw things which are better left unmentioned. Girls dressed as men—masks of all kind—horns and flappers—these were the harmless side of the show. Later on gangs of hoodlums appeared who would cut off single girls, surround them, and then the rest could be pictured from her screams or giggles as the case may be. Nobody thought it necessary to interfere but the sport was rather rough.

The most interesting parts of the trip to France were visits to the battlefields of the First World War, which my father made with a classmate, Crane Brinton, later a Harvard pro-

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fessor and historian of the anatomy of revolution. They bought boots (for $4.50!) and hiked for miles through devastated areas in northern France that had been the scene of fighting both in 1914 and in the Ludendorff offensives of 1918. In many places little had been done to repair the war's damage: "Everywhere we went there were ruined villages—cut up fields—and piles of rubbish." Near Reims they visited the trenches, machine-gun nests, and artillery emplacements and found hundreds of shells still stored and ready for firing. "The impression throughout was that of the awful, awful waste of men, time, and material—and for what?"

Then it was off to Italy to see the artistic glories of Florence and Rome. Like many Americans of the time, my father was annoyed by the poor Italian railroad service. The trains frequently did not run at all, much less on time. Strikes were frequent, and at one point his frustration broke out in the diary: "Damn Italy with her railroad strikes and proletariat restlessness."

As the months of travel drew toward a close, some darker themes began to appear amid the exuberance of the traveler. The future suddenly seemed uncertain. On June 8, 1920, he noted:

> Republican convention meets tomorrow at Chicago. Wood and Johnson each with pledges of some 150. But large majority unpledged and either Coolidge or Lowden is apt to slip in unnoticed. God help the country whoever comes in.

A week later he wrote:

> Governor Coolidge was nominated running mate with Harding, and a poorer pair I have never seen. Harding a nonentity and a machine man supported by a man who is anathema to labor and the Irish. This is to win the election.

The storm clouds were gathering over Europe. In the same month, my father read the recently published work by John Maynard Keynes—*The Economic Consequences of the Peace*. It was for him an eye-opener:

> It is really a marvelously convincing indictment of the Treaty and of the men who made it. There are acute psychological analyses of Wilson and Clemenceau, and while Lloyd George is spared, he is not neglected and is given his share of blame. The financial terms themselves are analyzed and reduced to their inevitable absurdity. And the question is raised, for what reasons other than political and self deceptive was such a treaty, obviously impossible, entered into? It is a great book.

He also noted:

> Troubles in Italy are many. There is no government; Southern Apulia is in intense revolt. On the east frontier D'Anunzio is raising hell around Fiume, and strikes are the rule rather than the exception everywhere. Where will this lead to?

The answer to that question came swiftly. Less than two years later Mussolini and his Blackshirts marched on Rome, seized power, and made the trains run on time—the same trains about which my father and other American travelers had complained a short time before.

Other issues—some only dimly perceived—are with us still. In June of 1920, my father wrote: "The Irish situation is more troublesome every day. There have been riotous days especially at Derry." The inability of the English to solve the Irish question perplexed him, as did their "uninformed and prejudiced hatred of the Irish."

On the same day he observed:

> In the meantime other complications are arising in other parts of the world. Kemal (Mustapha) Pasha [later to be known as Ataturk] is advancing on Constantinople at the head of the Turkish Nationalist Army. The menace is in the possible rise of a fanatic spirit . . . in the Mohammedan world.

He also observed the rise of Zionism triggered by the Balfour Declaration. In June of 1920 there was a "brilliant gathering" at the London School of Economics to hear Herbert Samuel give an address on Palestine. Samuel was about to depart for Palestine as the first British high commissioner under the League of Nations mandate.

> He spoke ably of the problem before him and made clear the policy of the English government in Palestine. It is to encourage the slow and gradual infiltration of Jews into the country so as to eventually bring about a Jewish majority and hence a Jewish impress on the future Commonwealth. He was very careful never to speak beyond this stage,

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implying that the British empire will ever maintain a hold upon the land. If cautious, he was also very practical and hopeful in a sound way.

Not so reassuring was the Arab rioting of that year against Jewish immigration into Palestine. Most ominous of all—and duly noted in the diary—was the widespread attention in Britain to an anti-Semitic tract (supposedly authored by the Czarist secret police)—the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This was the same work that Henry Ford serialized in America in his *Dearborn Independent*, and its appearance presaged one of the tragedies of the century.

Thus it is with a feeling of foreboding that my father's diary ends, a sense of forces loose in the world that no one could control and the result of which no one could predict. The idyll of the youthful diarist was about to end.

Getreidegasse 23, Salzburg

NICHOLAS SAMARAS

In the furthest recesses of the hushed house,
past the scrolled stairwells, the closed
filigreed windows, creamy with light,
in the roped-off chamber poses his piano:
the darkly-oiled stain of its silence,
as small, say, as a child's coffin.
It cannot bear the weight
of Madame Mozart's thin plaque:
I attest that this is the pianoforte
upon which my husband composed The Magic Flute.
It stands on delicate rosewood calves,
holding its breath.
It waits to break from this still museum,
the muteness of history,
waits for a touch on yellowing keys,
waits for a hand to reinvent it.

✪ NICHOLAS SAMARAS is a teaching fellow at the University of Denver. He is currently translating the poetry of the late Greek poet Tasos Leivaditis.

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Books

The Sleep of Reason

How the Insane Were Turned into the Homeless

DAVID GUTMANN

MADNESS IN THE STREETS: HOW PSYCHIATRY AND THE LAW ABANDONED THE MENTALLY ILL. *By Rael Jean Isaac and Virginia C. Armat. Free Press. $24.95.*

Liberal social scientists, radical reformers, and crusading lawyers have in recent years fastened on the "homeless," citing their misery as evidence that the last stages of capitalism are upon us. But Rael Jean Isaac and Virginia C. Armat, in their densely researched and powerful book on de-institutionalization of the insane and its consequences, have shown us that these same experts—self-elected to be society's bad conscience—are themselves in large part responsible for the misery of the mentally ill and for the trashing of our cities. It is they, the crusading psychiatrists, anti-psychiatrists, community mental health experts, patient's rights lawyers, etc., who paved the roads from the asylums to our urban hells with their good intentions—and with the flawed philosophies and programs that flowed from these same good intentions. Isaac and Armat tell us, in rich detail, how these various parties got into the act, under what banners, at what point in the process of de-institutionalization, and with what grim consequences.

First, there were the rogue psychiatrists, the bad boys who became anti-culture heroes: Thomas Szasz, the cranky but eloquent psychiatrist who insisted that there was no such thing as "mental illness," that it was a myth; and Ronald Laing, who argued with equally nutty eloquence that schizophrenia, rather than being a mental illness, represented a higher and saner form of consciousness—"hyper-sanity," no less. Arguing from a libertarian, even right-wing bias, Szasz held that the idea of mental illness was a joint invention of the psychiatrists who needed income and the do-gooders who wanted to limit the freedom of strong but unruly people. By contrast, Laing—who romanticized madness—was more in tune with the earnest, high-minded craziness of the sixties radicals and counter-culturists: for them, the ego, the rational psychic establishment, represented a kind of cancer, a metastasis within the head of the life-hating social establishment—the "camp of death"—outside the head. Laing helped to move the revolution away from oppressive society to the psychic interior, directing it against society's inward metaphor, the ego. The schizophrenic was a noble savage, and madness was in actuality liberation: a Molotov cocktail of the revolution.

Isaac and Armat carefully document how subsequent waves of experts aided in this work, of moving trouble out of the head and relocating it—or the blame for it—in some piece of the ambient society. Thus, the family systems' theorists argued that the emotionally ill patient was in truth a scapegoat, a kind of drainage sump for a larger pathology, of the family as a whole. Going beyond the anti-

✪ DAVID GUTMANN is professor of psychiatry and education at Northwestern University Medical School and the author of *Reclaimed Powers: Toward a New Psychology of Men and Women in Later Life.*

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psychiatry psychiatrists, the sociologists came on line to further the work of externalizing mental trouble, of recasting the patient as a victim of social rather than psychological pathology. Thus, Erving Goffman proposed, in *Asylums*, that madness was a reasonable *political* response to total institutions: any extreme, unnatural situation—for example, mental hospitalization—*demanded* a deviant response. Sociology's "labeling" theorists gave such plea-copping evasions the tonus of high science. According to Howard Becker: "Social groups create deviants by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders . . . deviant behavior is behavior that people so label."

Goffman had blamed the asylum, as a special kind of social ecology, for bringing about the condition of madness that it was ostensibly designed to treat. Now the labeling theorists completed the job that he began, of indicting the entire mental health profession. The psychiatrists were revealed as societies' hatchet men and women, behavior police who stigmatized and discredited those with the energy and the guts to be unorthodox. In the eyes of the social science establishment, "mental illness" was becoming an empty term; it referred to no real phenomena in the heads of patients, but only to a misconception lodged in the minds of the psychiatrists and given spurious reality by the asylums that they sponsored. Most sentient humans, from peasants to psychiatrists, regardless of historical period, ethnicity, or society, have recognized the terrible and ubiquitous condition of madness; but with a few strategic texts, the anti-psychiatry social scientists had tried to replace this universal awareness with a lumpen-Marxist conspiracy theory.

Thus far I have been mainly summarizing the order and argument of the book. But at this point I should like to interject some ideas of my own concerning the cultural climates—beyond academia and psychiatry—that burgeoned in the sixties and seventies, which guaranteed the wide acceptance of these hectic social philosophies.

The activists of the sixties and seventies are now canonized as secular saints. But I was a young professor in Ann Arbor ("Dope Capital of the Midwest") and I remember them quite differently: not as saints, but as *gluttons*. To be sure, they craved sainthood; but they wanted at the same time to be dramatic sinners. Alternatively, they tried to overcome the stern boundary that distinguishes saints from sinners, or true revolutionaries from posturing dope-heads. They were articulate, over-ideational *kvetchers* whose ultimate struggle was not with their fathers, nor with capitalist society, but with *all* limitations, whatever their source. They rephrased their essential complaint—that their gender, ethnicity, and nationality had been imposed on them without prior consultation—into the language of politics and simplistic Marxism. The burden of their essential complaint read like this: "Not fate, but political repression decrees that we are members of only one species, of only one sex, and that we are born to die." These stern limitations, so long regarded as fixed conditions of our existence, were being deconstructed, blithely redefined as nothing more than labels stamped on passive minds by the "camp of death." A vast political conspiracy kept everybody from their natural birthright of being everything; undo it, and we are free.

There is nothing new about such ideas. Dotty old ladies in California, busy fighting water fluoridation, had pioneered equivalent conspiracy theories long before there was a trendy counterculture. The amazing thing is how quickly such erudite delusions were accepted, and by the very psychiatrists who are charged with maintaining the collective immune system against irrationality. But the most influential psychiatrists are social scientists as well as clinicians. Exposed to academic labeling theory and all the rest of it, many psychiatrists forgot their hard-won clinical experience and allowed *themselves* to be labeled—they accepted the mark of the oppressor pasted on them by the sociologists. They were not only the messengers of mental illness, but also, by implication, became the bad news. In expiation, and aided by the new psychotropic drugs, they set about emptying the state hospitals and the closed wards. Concurrently, many of them signed on to the emerging community mental health philosophy and thereby embraced the major premise of anti-psychiatry: There is no mental illness as such; there are only sick and disordered societies requiring cleansing revolution rather than individual therapy. As the late homeless advocate Mitch Snyder put it: "A

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psychotic episode is a socio-political event and not a medical event."

But if the responsibility for mental illness was externalized into society, then by the same token the burden of treatment was also externalized into the "community." Like other icons of the sentimental Left—for example, the "environment," or organically grown veggies—the "community" was celebrated as part of the camp of life and the source of natural wholeness and healing. Rather than trained, professional skills, "authenticity" became the first criteria for community mental health workers. We were into the era of the barefoot psychiatrist and of untrained community activists hired to replace psychiatrists. Carried away by the hectic spirit of revolt (perhaps because it was aimed against themselves), over-excited psychiatrists were urging their black or Hispanic workers to sack the center and do away with the psychiatrists.

But Isaac and Armat show very clearly that all this heady stuff was not good for troubled heads. Thus, the dispossessed schizophrenics, newly sprung from the back wards, did not find much welcome in the mental health centers, the clinics that were supposed to smooth their path into the loving, healing community. They found centers that were geared up to organize street theater in favor of some leftist agenda; but they did not find personnel who knew much about severe mental disorder or who were prepared for the mundane, undramatic but essential side of treatment—providing structure, monitoring medications, locating relatives, or finding adequate housing. Predictably, center personnel (uniformly uniformed in their carefully torn blue jeans, tie-dyes, and ponytails) were most congenial with those patients who were most like themselves—reformed druggies, for example, looking for feel-good encounter groups. But for the chronic schizophrenic, the mental health center was too often only a temporary way station on the long slide from the back ward to the back alley.

Meanwhile, even as the mentally ill were being deprived of the care that they really needed, the lawyers were piling into the scrimmage to defend the "prisoners of psychiatry." Asserting that "psychiatry is a way to get rid of people who annoy others," the patient advocates fought and won precedent-setting court battles against commitment for any patient who was not clearly dangerous to himself or to others. But the determination of psychiatric risk is not a simple matter; detecting a suicidal or homicidal tendency is a job for trained professionals and not for lawyers, however noble their intentions. The patients' advocates were, as Isaac and Armat put it, "practicing medicine with the wrong degree."

But while the patients' advocates were harmful to their disturbed clients in the clinical sense, they nevertheless provided the patient population—particularly the paranoids—with a more palatable view of their own affliction. Masses of experts had by now accredited the patients as bona fide victims—not of their own disordered psyches, but of some faceless conspiracy that had punished them for nonconformity. Rebaptized as victims, discharged mental patients could join the swelling chorus. They, too, along with their lawyers, became the bad conscience of the mental health profession. Psychiatry, which has the task of correcting delusional thinking, had instead helped to generate a worldview that gave new grounding, new legitimacy to its patients' paranoia. The radical lawyers and psychiatrists had taught their patients how to give the coup de grace to the system of care that had, however ineptly, tried to nurture and heal them.

As an ultimate expression of this paradox, the National Institutes of Mental Health now hires ex-patients as expert consultants on treatment regimes, with veto power over financing. Joined with the patient advocates, the ex-patients discredited all somatic treatments: psychosurgery, electro-convulsive therapy ("shock treatment"), and the whole panel of psychoactive drugs used to suppress psychotic symptoms. As an example of the hyperbole that had replaced clear clinical thinking, all psychotropic drugs were dismissed as being the "chemical equivalent of a lobotomy."

We have all experienced the most disastrous consequences of psychiatric revisionism. Our city centers are showcases for the wildest forms of psychosis, displays no longer seen in the remaining asylums, where patients do take their medicine on schedule. Goffman, it turns out, was wrong. You can take the madman out of the madhouse, but you do not thereby take the madness out of the madman. Quite the contrary. Instead of being

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defined by his surroundings, the madman shapes the world to his measure and turns the city center into a version of the snake pit.

Off the street, the policy of de-institutionalization has had less public, but equally tragic consequences. The authors draw our attention to the nonviolent but disoriented patients who cannot find state-supported inpatient care and to the families that are being literally destroyed by terribly sick children whom they cannot hospitalize and will not consign to the streets. Perhaps worst of all, instead of being redeemed by the community, it turns out that madness has been criminalized. The authors report that the number of deranged individuals in our penitentiaries now equals the number still confined in mental institutions. "Rescued" from relatively protective asylums, the ex-patients end up in real prisons, in settings where they are much more at risk, more liable to sadistic exploitation, than on any locked ward.

For the sake of balance, it should be noted that the authors have located a few bright spots, aftercare centers that live up to the original community mental health idea of comprehensive care for the discharged chronic patient. The authors are particularly impressed by the Thresholds Program, ably directed in Chicago by Dr. Jerry Dincin (a psychologist who also belongs to the Northwestern University Medical School faculty, where I work and teach). Thresholds staff deal with discharged, usually chronic patients in a manner that combines dedication to the individual case with a no-nonsense, unsentimental *professional* attitude. They see to it that patients take their medicines; they provide confrontive, interpretative "talk therapy," and they maintain their patients in the community. The Extended Ambulatory Care Program, also linked to Northwestern's Institute of Psychiatry (and not mentioned in the book), is another point of light: a system of aftercare and day hospital settings where severely disturbed patients receive individually titrated doses of medications, psychodynamic psychotherapy, social services, and rehabilitation counseling. Again, as with Thresholds, the staff is professional and dedicated, concerned about individuals, but unsentimental about "the homeless." Unfortunately, programs of this caliber are very much the exception rather than the rule.

I do have one quarrel with the authors of this almost flawless book. Like the schools of thought they oppose, Isaac and Armat diminish the importance of the human psyche as a system in its own right. Thus, the revisionists deny that mental illness exists; instead, they pathologize the larger society. In their turn, and in order to preserve mental illness as a "real" phenomenon, the authors end up by pathologizing the body, particularly the genes, and the neuro-endocrine system. The anti-psychiatrists externalize the responsibility for mental illness into the failings of society; and these authors shift the responsibility in the other direction, toward the frailties of the body. Thus, even as they distance themselves from anti-psychiatry, the authors do sign off on its central and most misguided ideas: that individuals bear no responsibility for their own troubles; that they play no part in shaping their own fate—even a bad one; and that they have no covert investment in their own symptoms.

The authors have bought the latest psychiatric *Zeitgeist*: that somatic, usually genetic, flaws are the independent variables in the pathogenic process—a disordered gene produces a disordered mind or even a particular neurotic symptom. Accordingly, the scientific chase halloos off to find bad genes, not only those responsible for schizophrenia and depression, but also for alcoholism, eating disorders, racism, and white-collar criminality.

But when they buy into the "rogue genes" doctrine, the authors ignore a large body of scientific work that shows that the causal sequences can also flow the other way, from the mind to the body. Purely psychological conflicts—between reason and emotion, between appetites and ideals—generate anxiety; and the "fight or flight" systems of the body are mobilized in response to the resulting sense of emergency. When conflicts remain unresolved and the stress on physical systems is unabated, the body can develop multiple disorders—ulcers, immune system suppression, high blood pressure, etc.—of the sort that can kill without help from any lethal gene.

The psychodynamic position, which I espouse, takes a more tragic but ultimately more liberating view: that patients, for their own reasons, act so as to find or even create their own purgatories. If patients are in some part responsible for their troubles, then ultimately

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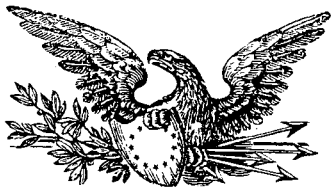

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they have the power to create a better fate. Nowadays, this stern but effective doctrine is called "blaming the victim," but it should be remembered that most psychodynamic psychiatrists and psychologists did not buy into the new, "exculpating the victim" doctrines that have proved so destructive. It is probably significant that the effective, redeeming community mental health services, such as Thresholds and Northwestern's Extended Ambulatory Care Program, are determinedly Freudian—in the broadest sense—in their therapeutic stance.

Besides being wrong, the somatocentric view propagates another version of victimhood. As such, it has bad consequences for the patient and for clinical practice. The antipsychiatrists taught patients that they were victims of society, and somatic psychiatry teaches that they are victims of their own flesh. In either case, the patient is freed from any responsibility for his condition. Indeed, the somatocentric philosophy provides the patient with new cop-outs, new reasons for indulging the symptoms: "How can I stop drinking when I am commanded by my alcoholism gene?"

The lessons to be learned from the tragedy of our streets go far beyond the proper treatment of mental illness. The major lesson, for me, is this: Do not trust social scientists, particularly when they attack and try to change long-established, recurrent features of our social life and the common, practical wisdom that supports such arrangements. This bloody century has already taught us what happens when technologists, always for the best of reasons, disturb—without knowing or reckoning the consequences—long-established ecological relationships. Full of zeal to kill insect pests with DDT, we ended by killing the birds as well, bringing on the Silent Spring. The same critique should be leveled against the liberal intellectuals who are not only messing up the mental health system, but are also busily devastating our long-established psycho-ecological arrangements around sex roles, child rearing, and the division of labor by gender, as in warfare. The returns are not yet in, but preliminary results, particularly those having to do with the psychological malaise of our children, strongly suggest that we could be heading towards new social disasters, dwarfing those that Isaac and Armat have already documented.

This powerful book reminds us that we should take very seriously the advice given by Paul Johnson in the last paragraph of his recent book, *The Intellectuals*:

> One of the principal lessons of our tragic century, which has seen so many millions of innocent lives sacrificed in schemes to improve the lot of humanity, is—beware intellectuals. Not merely should they be kept well away from the levers of power, they should also be objects of particular suspicion when they seek to offer collective advice . . . for intellectuals, far from being highly individualistic and non-conformist people, follow certain regular patterns of behavior. Taken as a group, they are often ultra-conformist within the circles formed by those whose approval they seek and value. This is what makes them, *en masse*, so dangerous, for it enables them to create climates of opinion and prevailing orthodoxies, which themselves often generate irrational and destructive courses of action. Above all, we must at all times remember what intellectuals have habitually forgot: That people matter more than concepts and must come first. The worst of all despotisms is the heartless tyranny of ideas.

Even more dangerous, as Isaac and Armat have shown, are grandiose delusions that masquerade as Big Ideas.

Curtain Up

FRED ALLEN: HIS LIFE AND WIT. *By Robert Taylor. Little Brown. $19.95.*

THE VOICE OF THE CITY: VAUDEVILLE AND POPULAR CULTURE IN NEW YORK, 1880–1930. *By Robert W. Snyder. Oxford University Press. $19.95.*

Reviewed by JACOB A. STEIN

We all know what the big time is. It's the tops. It's the Louvre Museum. It's the nose of the great Durante. It's cellophane. There was a time when big time conveyed a special meaning, its vaudeville meaning. It identified those who performed twice a day, and both performances in the best vaudeville houses. The small time was five performances a day in shabby theaters.

JACOB A. STEIN is a lawyer practicing in Washington, D.C.

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Some ten thousand vaudeville performers, gypsies with luggage, were working or looking for work in the years from 1920 to 1930. It was a work force made up of song-and-dance men, deadpan comics, magicians, animal acts, acrobats, iron-jaw acts, good actors, bad actors, jugglers, knockabouts, and musicians. Everyone's goal, including the animals, was the big time. Gilbert Seldes, writing in 1924, described what they had to do to make the big time.

> They have to do whatever they do swiftly, neatly, without lost motion; they must touch and leap aside; they dare not hold an audience more than a few minutes, at least not with the same stunt; they have to establish an immediate contact, set a current in motion, and exploit it to the last possible degree in the shortest space of time. They have to be always "in the picture," for though the vaudeville state seems to give them endless freedom and innumerable opportunities, it holds them to strict account; it permits no fumbling, and there are no reparable errors. The materials they use are trivial, yes; but the treatment must be accurate to a hair's breadth; the wine they serve is light, it must fill the goblet to the very brim, and not a drip must spill over. There is no great second act to redeem a false entrance; no grand climacteric to make up for even a moment's dullness.

The big time was controlled by a group of monopolists, impresarios, sporting astrakhan-collared overcoats protecting an upper pocket carrying a brace of Havana cigars protecting a heart of stone. They selected the few whose names stood three feet high at vaudeville's palaces of pleasure.

The big time followed a careful ritual. It had eight acts. The show opens with the professor, the leader of the band, tapping his baton. The lights go dim and music is in the air. The opening act, acrobats or jugglers, knock about as the audience members take their seats. In the second spot is a double act, singing and dancing. The number three act is a sketch. The fourth spot, the one just before intermission, is filled by someone who thinks he should be the headliner. The real headliner is on next to closing. That's the place to be, next to closing, the third act after intermission. For the final act, it is the acrobats again.

When vaudeville was king, its performers were always live, very much alive. The words "in person" and "live" were unnecessary on the show bill. It was vitality jumping over the footlights into a small cozy theater. Each performance was now or never. This placed an urgent responsibility not only on the performer but on the audience as well. The great performances had to be fixed in the mind and placed in a gallery of memories to be recalled from time to time. And if the performer returned next year, any inaccuracy could be corrected.

The same technology that gives us, at the flick of a switch, the performance we desire, also removes the thrill and the mysterious pathos that comes with immediacy, with a performance that will never be seen just that way again and a performer whose name next week may appear in a black-bordered theatrical necrology, leaving only props and racks behind.

The theatrical neonatologists identify the 1900s as the birth of big time. The theatrical coroners identify 1932 as the death of big time, when the very top of the big time, the Palace Theatre, closed down two-a-day vaudeville, a victim of radio, movies, the Depression, and the flinty myocardium.

Robert Taylor's biography of Fred Allen, a man who played the big time, gives us all the facts worth having about Fred Allen, his circle, and his times. The Taylor biography and Robert W. Snyder's book about New York vaudeville, the two taken together, give a *couleur-de-rose* tint to a back page of American history. They provide what may be the last good look at vaudeville's short life, some thirty years of clamor up the golden staircase to a tinseled paradise consisting of fame and the big money for those few, the very few, who made it.

Vaudeville was real American-style opportunity, not just hokum. Put together a good fifteen-minute act, and if it catches on, there is a shot at the big time.

The act, although it was all performers had, would last a lifetime. Didn't Smith and Dale and didn't Willie West and McGinty do the same act year in and year out, always big time and always working? Snyder describes the process:

> Despite the odds against success, vaudeville was egalitarian in a competitive way. Vaudeville was far more open than the formal professions: the key criterion for success was the ability to put an act

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over. The start-up costs were minimal. Performers invested their ability to sing, dance, tell a joke, or do somersaults in midair. Their capital was in their bodies and their craftsmanship. Family lineage or formal education meant little.

It worked just that way for Fred Allen. We learn from Taylor's biography that Fred Allen was born in the Cambridge, Massachusetts, area and christened John Florence Sullivan. His mother died when he was three. He had no memory of her. His father, a somewhat pathetic figure, with a weakness for alcohol, worked as a library bookbinder. Aunt Lizzie was Fred's father and mother. She struggled to keep her household together with the domestic versatility required of those with not enough money to cover even the necessities. Fred attended Cambridge public schools. He later joked that he passed through Harvard on his way back and forth to Aunt Lizzie's.

Fred's father used all his Boston connections to connect Fred with the Boston Public Library as a runner. In his idle library time, the fourteen-year-old Fred took up juggling. He commenced his challenge to the laws of gravity by crisscrossing three balls in the air. When he learned to do this seemingly impossible stunt, he astonished himself by juggling clubs, hats, and then doing his trick with the three cigar boxes. He transformed himself from a nobody to a somebody who could make an audience say, "I wish I could do that."

Rather quickly Fred Allen found opportunities to play the show-off. Amateur shows led to the vaudeville years. Taylor writes that Fred's footloose "vaudeville days of his youth remained the brightest in memory."

The name Fred Allen came into existence only after John Florence Sullivan used up four other stage names. Freddy James was his name when he toured the Australian vaudeville theaters. On his return to America, he discarded Freddy James in favor of Fred Allen. He needed the new name to conceal the fact that he was playing in two New York vaudeville houses at the same time. Freddy James was a self-effacing performer billed as the World's Worst Juggler. Fred Allen was a well-dressed, somewhat pushy swell, self-described on the show bill as A Young Fellow Trying to Get Along. Most performers used explanatory tags: Al Jolson was the World's Greatest Entertainer; Eva Tanguay was the I Don't Care Girl; Joe Jackson was the Funniest Cyclist in the World; Ted Lewis was the High Hat Tragedian of Jazz; Ed Wynn was the Perfect Fool.

Fred Allen did something Freddy James didn't do. Fred Allen not only juggled, he played the guitar, but not too well. He continued in the small time, running here and there, experimenting with the jokes and the tricks. He perfected his walk-on and his encores. And then the unexpected call came. E. F. Albee, of the Palace Theatre, needed a quick fill-in act. One of the unique by-products of New York City corruption was an ordinance prohibiting acrobats from appearing in vaudeville theaters on the Sabbath. No other acts were prohibited. Mr. Albee had the four Boises, flying acrobats, opening the Palace Sunday matinee before he discovered it was against the law. Was Fred Allen available to open the program at the Palace? Allen played the matinee. He was canceled before the evening performance. So the year 1918 marked his rise to the big time and then his tumble back into the small time. Between 1918 and 1922 Fred Allen was both a small-timer and a big-timer, but mostly a small-timer. Gradually the juggling faded and the gifted satiric monologuist emerged.

In 1922, his watershed year, Fred Allen's career changed course. He connected up with a Broadway revue, *The Passing Show of 1922*. He helped write its comedy sketches. He found that he not only could perform comedy, he was now a special-material man. *The Passing Show* brought another collateral benefit. He met a chorus girl named Portland Hoffa. In time they married and lived happily ever after.

In 1926, an act Allen wrote got him another call to the Palace where he appeared with his partner, Bert Yorke, a vaudeville song-and-dance man. The act knocked 'em dead, stopped the show, brought the house down, scored a socko hit. They not only played the full week but were held over. From there it was nothing but the big time for Fred. He made lateral moves into Broadway revues, including *The Little Show* with Clifton Webb and Libby Holman, an odd trio if there ever was one. Clifton Webb later cast aside his dancing shoes and turned himself into a dandy of a movie star named Mr. Belvedere. Libby Holman made new headlines when she beat a murder rap after R. J. Reynolds's son, who was in love with her, was found dead.

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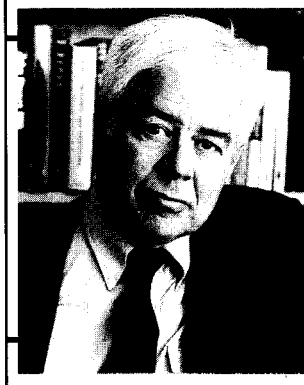

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Fred Allen wrote an occasional column for *Variety*. Robert Taylor notes that by 1931 Fred Allen had developed his mature, comic prose style. *The New Yorker* published an article of his titled "Don't Trust Midgets." As the 1920s danced to its end, many vaudevillians crossed over into radio and the movies. Those who controlled vaudeville were displaced by the money men, who saw that the new forms of mass entertainment, the radio and movies, would replace the vaudeville industry.

Joseph P. Kennedy contributed to the transformation. Marian Spitzer, in her book *The Palace*, gives the details of a transaction that theater people of the time enjoyed retelling. It is the story of one bully kicking another. Kennedy acquired control of a small motion picture company and built it into a successful operation. Through a series of maneuvers using the motion picture company as a cloak, Kennedy bought into the E. F. Albee interests that controlled the Palace, the same E. F. Albee who first put Fred Allen into the big time. Albee was not well liked. He used his power cruelly and over the years destroyed many lives. Kennedy gained control of the Albee interests before Albee knew what was happening. Albee treated Kennedy as a junior partner. Shortly thereafter, Albee appeared at Joe Kennedy's office to discuss theater business. Kennedy just looked at him and said: "Didn't you know, Ed? You're washed up. You're through." Albee's closest friends said it couldn't have happened to a more deserving fellow. When Albee died in 1930, an attendee at the final ceremony reported it in bottom-line terms: "The funeral played to a small house." Kennedy had no interest in vaudeville's obsequy and soon transferred his financial prehensility to more compelling interests.

When Fred Allen was first asked what he thought of radio, he said: "Not much. When I buy a piece of furniture I don't want it to talk to me." Despite that observation, he joined the big parade, and in October 1932 he was on the air with the Linit Bath Club Review, airing Sunday at 9:00 P.M. The Linit show remained for twenty-six weeks, and Fred was into his radio days. He was a celebrity. He later would declare that a celebrity is "a person who works hard all his life to become well known, then wears dark glasses to avoid being recognized."

Fred Allen took control of radio comedy in 1934 with an hour-long program sponsored by Ipana toothpaste and Sal Hepatica. First known as the "Hour of Smiles," it was retitled "Town Hall Tonight." It opened with Peter Van Steeden's Ipana troubadours playing "Smile, Darn Ya, Smile." It became a Wednesday night standard and remained so until 1942. Fred Allen tried to write most of the program himself, but in time he found it impossible and he picked up "the boys," as he called his writers, Arnold Auerbach and Herman Wouk. After the Wednesday evening broadcast, the boys went to the Stage Delicatessen, whose proprietor, Max Asnas, Fred called the Corned Beef Confucius. The boys put together the outline of the next week's program. Fred reached bed around 4:00 Thursday morning. He arose at 11:00, went to the neighborhood YMCA, boxed a few rounds, played handball, jogged, and tossed the medicine ball. Each Wednesday it started all over again.

In 1936, Taylor tells us, Allen's radio audience numbered some twenty million. He delighted his audience with such things as his feud with Jack Benny and his tours through Allen's Alley. In 1945 the Alley acquired the cast by which it is best remembered. Kenny Delmar was Senator Claghorn; Parker Fennelly was Titus Moody, the New England farmer; Peter Donald was Ajax Cassidy, the stage Irishman; Minerva Pious was Mrs. Nussbaum, hopelessly entangled in Yiddish-American idioms.

Every now and then Fred Allen brought back one of his vaudeville friends. These included Jack Haley, Doc Rockwell, and George Jessel. Fred Allen was in awe of Jessel's vulgarity, bathos, and mythomania. In one sketch, Allen said he was constructing a vaudeville monster and he wished permission to use Jessel's voice. Jessel accommodated. When Allen reminisced about vaudeville, he told stories about the closed world of the performer and the obligations of self-promotion. He spoke of a comedian named Bert Frohman. One time Frohman opened in Baltimore to an empty house. There were only six people in the audience. When Bert met his friends, later, he said, "Baltimore was terrible—only seven people in the audience."

In 1948, ABC positioned the program "Stop the Music" against Fred Allen's program.

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Anyone who wants to be reminded of "Stop the Music" can rent Woody Allen's *Radio Days* from the video shop. The movie opens with a scene showing second-rate burglars engaged in their work in a lower-middle-class household in old New York. "Stop the Music" is on the radio. The phone rings. One of the burglars picks up the phone. Bert Parks is on the line. He wants to know the name of the song. The burglar guesses it. Three days later the tragedy of the burglary is nullified when the innocent victims are deluged with the prizes—refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, and a motorcycle. Fred Allen would have loved the scene, but it was "Stop the Music" that stopped Fred Allen. He was dropped when his ratings dropped.

Although Fred was unaware of it for a while, his career as an entertainer was over. He also found that his health was not too good. In 1949, he suffered a minor stroke. He recovered and made appearances from time to time on radio. He especially enjoyed mixing it up with the smart alecks on the show "Information Please." He tried television, but it didn't work well for him. Neither did his movie appearances. His time had passed.

Fred turned to writing. His first book was *Treadmill to Oblivion*, a story of quality radio's decline and fall. The book was well received. He started another, an autobiography. Before Allen died, suddenly, of a heart attack on March 17, 1956, he had completed his recollections. The book was published shortly after his death under the title *Much Ado About Me*. It is not the extended press release coupled with a yearning for the smell of the greasepaint and the roar of the crowd that one finds in most theatrical autobiographies. It contains many mature observations on long-ago Boston and the vaudeville life, its ups and downs.

Fred Allen comes through as a man of quality. The early habits of trying to improve his act lasted a lifetime. He was always learning, and he was blessed with the love of books. In contrast to most theater people, he was introspective, frugal, and intelligently generous. During his travels he got into the habit of buying hick-town real estate. I once talked to a lawyer who knew something about the ultimate value of those properties. They were sold when Portland Hoffa died some years after Fred. Fred had a very good eye for a real estate bargain.

Robert Snyder, in his book on New York vaudeville, refers to Fred Allen's *Much Ado About Me*. Snyder has done all the other required reading: Gilbert Douglas's *American Vaudeville*, Joe Laurie's *Vaudeville: From the Honkey-Tonks to the Palace*, the Samuels' *Once Upon a Stage*, Bill Smith's *Vaudevillians*, and many more such books. He also went into the field and interviewed the big- and the small-timers still among us. I hope Snyder caught the show-off bug and taught himself to juggle while playing "Bye Bye Blues" on the twin kazoos. If he did, we will turn him over to Benjamin Franklin Keith, Albee's partner. A kickback arrangement will get him the next-to-closing spot at the New Old New Palace, way up there in the big blue sky. The curtain's going up. Mr. Leader man, something in ragtime, if you please.

Measure for Measure

MISSING MEASURES: MODERN POETRY AND THE REVOLT AGAINST METER. *By Timothy Steele. University of Arkansas Press. $22.95. Paper, $12.95.*

Reviewed by MEG SCHOERKE

Timothy Steele's objective seems simple enough: to examine why many modern poets abandoned meter in favor of free verse. The explanation, he hopes, will inspire readers to re-evaluate the poetry and criticism of the English and American experimentalists. His analysis is not limited to the turn of the century, but ranges forward from the ancients, in order to reveal the ways in which the moderns both misapprehended and misappropriated classical assumptions about poetry. Rather than revitalize tradition, Steele claims, the moderns subverted it. To their credit, they hoped that "a new system would generate itself out of the ruins," but for Steele the consequences of those hopes are catastrophic.

✪ MEG SCHOERKE teaches in the English department and in the Women's Studies Program at Washington University, St. Louis.

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By placing "more emphasis on the destruction of the old than on the creation of the new," the moderns left in their wake only destruction without the means of renovation. Steele's real objectives, therefore, are less historical than programmatic: to prove the validity of this argument and to call upon poets to readopt meter.

Missing Measures is intended to refute orthodox proponents of free verse who maintain "that meter is entirely obsolete and that anyone who questions this view should be squelched at all costs." The book presents a mixture of manifesto and scholarship, and one of its problems is that its seams are all too visible: after pages of dry explication, Steele will veer into polemic whose force is often lessened by its predictability. Since he strives for objectivity in the analytical sections and only shows his hand selectively, the book lacks the thorough and invigorating cantankerousness that is a hallmark of the criticism of his acknowledged masters, Yvor Winters and J. V. Cunningham. But this does not lessen the urgency of his challenge, not only to those who still carry the torch for modernism, but to poets writing in meter who acquiesce to being called "New Formalists." He insists that such a pat designation obscures differences in style, theme, and temperament among poets who adopt traditional versification. Moreover, in a literary climate where poets are routinely classified according to their cultural or political orientations, the term *formalist* too readily takes on the whiff of ideology—one that is, supposedly, ultra-conservative. As Steele notes, meter is neutral. It is a means by which poets—of whatever political persuasion—"can make what they say forceful and memorable."

In his definition of meter, Steele reveals himself as an heir of Dryden, who, in the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, pronounced that verse is "a rule and line by which [a poet] keeps his building compact and even, which otherwise lawless imagination would raise either irregularly or loosely." Meter, according to Steele, not only contributes to poetic structure but generates it: without meter, a poet has nothing with which to organize thought or to curb reckless impulse. It provides a simple, though necessary, limitation that a good poet works with—and against—to give his words a precision and resonance that will delight readers and make poems memorable. Meter is an abstract norm of limitless potential that is differently realized by the speech habits and temperament of every poet who uses it. As such, it is not bound by culture or ideology, only by the physical properties of individual languages. Meter is neither style nor idiom but a vehicle that can convey many styles and idioms. Although for the amateur meter may lead to inflated rhetoric and skewed syntax, in the hands of experienced writers measure is not binding but liberating, because it provides an established pattern within which even the slightest variation gains resonance.

One may offer the counter-argument, of course, that free verse, which throws off the norm entirely, is even more liberating, and this was perhaps true in the early part of the century when writers of free verse explicitly worked against universally recognized metrical conventions. But, as Steele notes, "rhythmical organization has meaning only with reference to a literary context in which meter is practiced"; today, now that free verse dominates the field, variation has lost its potential for resonance since it alone is the norm: what began as liberty has descended into chaos. Steele proposes meter as a corrective that is, "as Wordsworth eloquently observes, like common law. Its basic statutes are few and clear; it asks obedience and offers rewards to all poets equally."

Why then did the moderns abandon such a fruitful resource? They wished, of course, to revitalize poetry by cleansing it of antiquated diction and subject matter; clarity, stylistic precision, and naturalness of idiom, they felt, could be achieved through free verse. Ford Maddox Ford asked the rhetorical questions: "Is there something about the mere framing of verse, the mere sound of it in the ear, that it must at once throw its practitioners or its devotees into an artificial frame of mind? . . . [M]ust it necessarily quicken them to the perception only of the sentimental, the false, the hackneyed aspects of life?" But Ford and others who asked similar questions wrongly identified a florid Victorian idiom with meter itself and zealously insisted that metrical composition, like Victorian style and subject matter, was obsolete. Their aims to draw the language and themes of poetry from modern life were admirable and were in this respect

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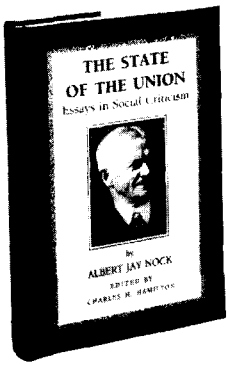

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Paperback $15.00 the set 0-86597-069-6
Liberty*Classics*, 1989

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like those of other literary revolutionaries. The difference was that all prior innovators, from Euripides and Horace through Dryden and Wordsworth, agreed that they could achieve the same goals while working in meter and that, moreover, meter was indispensable to poetry. Steele therefore stresses the profound singularity of modernism and questions T. S. Eliot's grounds for appealing to the authority of Dryden and Wordsworth as one justification for free verse.

The moderns' reaction against Victorian verse was also based in part, Steele claims, on their confusion of scansion with meter. In the nineteenth century, pedants taught students to overemphasize and give equal weight to the accented syllables in a line to be able to hear a poem's metrical norm. This method of reading aloud diminished their appreciation of the natural degrees of relative speech stress within lines. The moderns, whether they were taught the method in school or attended readings where verse was pronounced artificially, learned to view meter as stiff and unsubtle. Thus Pound's cry "compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome" and his characterization of iambic pentameter as "ti tum ti tum ti tum ti tum ti tum . . . from which every departure is treated as an exception" prove his tin ear.

Steele's contention, although ingenious, is difficult to believe. The only documentation for his discussion of the teaching of prosody in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is a 1978 interview he conducted with J. V. Cunningham, where Cunningham describes his own primary education in rural Montana. And Steele does not recognize that the moderns' compositions in traditional verse, as well as their ability to skirt and echo meter so skillfully in their free verse, belie their "confusion." Steele's contention, along with his more valid points about the moderns' conflation of Victorian style and idiom with meter, reveals one of his major assumptions: he does not understand how anyone who truly appreciates the beauties of measure could ever reject them.

Another factor that strongly influenced the moderns was the ascendancy of the novel. Steele begins his analysis of poets' responses to the success of prose fiction by discussing traditional distinctions between verse and prose. For, at least until the Renaissance, "fiction" was inseparable from metrical composition, and all writers and orators saw verse as the superior art. Ancient prose writers, to give their art prestige and freshness, strove to incorporate poetic devices, including a studied attentiveness to rhythm, into their work. Ironically, the situation today has been reversed: "rather than prose emulating the metrical order of poetry, poetry emulates the rhythmical freedom of prose," and poets cultivate loose rhythms and prosaic diction rather than abide by conventional metric. The moderns, when faced with the limitations of Victorian verse as opposed to the vigor of the novel, understandably chose to align their poetry with the best attributes of prose. Ultimately, however, "the idea that verse should be as well written as prose was converted into the very different idea that poetry might be written as the novel is written: without meter."

Modern poets and critics promote disrespect for meter by their familiar contrast between "verse," which constitutes mere craftsmanship, and "poetry," which is an art. Writers of verse, they suggest, content themselves with mere technique at the expense of the intangible factors that bring excellence to poetry. But the contrast exaggerates earlier formulations of the idea that good poetry is more than, but not exclusive of, metrical technique, and critics and writers err when they assume that poets have always accepted a basic incompatibility between "verse" and "poetry."

To illustrate modern assumptions about "poetry" and "verse," Steele gives detailed attention to Eliot's essay on Kipling. Eliot's conclusion that Kipling is a versifier, rather than a poet, turns on his distinction between "craft" and "art," where "verse" embodies mere directness of theme and metric, and "poetry" involves greater complexity because it communicates meaning indirectly through musical form. Eliot condemns Kipling for not being "one of those writers of whom one can say, that the *form* of English poetry will always be different from what it would have been if they had not written." The assertion troubles Steele because he feels it devalues all poets who have used conventional versification. Implying that even Shakespeare did not revolutionize poetry along the lines of

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Eliot's dictum, he reminds us that the plays and sonnets were written in iambic pentameter.

But Steele's counter-argument is itself troubling. He takes "form" literally to mean only "measure," and does not acknowledge that Shakespeare, through his constant and radical experimentation with iambic pentameter, broadened the resources of metric for all poets writing after him; nor does he note that Shakespeare also radically experimented with dramatic form. Instead he presents Shakespeare as a traditionalist whose virtue rests on the fact that he never used "experimental measures." Steele's iteration of the history behind the moderns' separation of verse from poetry is often illuminating, but his denial that form can be anything other than measure illuminates more vividly his implicit assessment of their distinction: if the moderns insist that true poetry need not be written in verse, then they advocate a poetry that is, by definition, formless.

The moderns were inspired to adopt free verse as a response to aestheticism, which Steele defines as "not simply or principally the doctrine of art for art's sake, [but] the much deeper and more general conviction, shared by modern writers of otherwise different persuasions, that poetry is a subjective and self-determining enterprise." Many modern poets believe that every poem is a world unto itself that generates its own mode of versification. By this logic, poems written in meter are of lesser value than those that exhibit a unique measure. Steele traces the rise of aestheticism through the theories of Baumgarten, Kant, Schelling, and Coleridge, who proposed the autonomy of art, the essential subjectivity of the imagination, and the independence of both from the tempering influence of rationality and morality. Kant's and Coleridge's theories, Steele accedes, evolved as sophisticated responses to larger issues of epistemology. Many modern poets, however, co-opted them solely to promote a doctrine of free expression, giving themselves full license to write by fiat. Steele observes that such poets often seem unaware "that an unfettered imagination may be a solipsistic imagination and that a poet liberated from normative procedures is possibly a poet cut off from the empirical and ethical world." The warning is well directed, but it is good to remember that solipsism and indifference to the complexities of ethics are attitudes developed by individuals, not the necessary counterparts of free verse, and that meter is not the only "normative procedure" available to a poet.

A final factor that influenced the development of free verse was the rise of science. From the seventeenth century on, poets anxious about the rapid advancements of science asked themselves why their art lacked the same degree of progress. To compensate, the moderns assimilated the vocabulary and procedures of science, proclaiming that art, too, should demonstrate breakthroughs fostered by experiment, significant technical innovation, and adoption of formulae. Just as the techniques and theories of past centuries are, for the most part, irrelevant to modern science, so too the poetic techniques and theories of former ages are obsolete. To gain credence for their experiments, many modern poets made false analogies between their principles of composition and the principles that govern evolution, Einstein's theories of relativity, and Freud's theories of the unconscious. Steele argues that in poetry novelty arises not from structural innovation, but from talent and the exigencies of subject matter. The moderns' emphasis on novelty of technique was therefore not only misguided, in his view, but counterproductive, since it influenced their successors to pursue novelty for its own sake.

But, as Steele so painstakingly demonstrates, poetry is not science, and we should therefore not expect it to conform to rigid standards of theoretical exactitude. Yet his own standards seem unnecessarily rigid. For in spite of the moderns' misconceptions that he brings to light, they and many of their successors produced poems that cannot easily be dismissed on the basis of imperfect theoretical underpinnings. If, however, good art should not have to rest on airtight principles, an important corollary is also true: when artists ground their work primarily on theory, rather than respond to the opportunities afforded by the triple demands of inspiration, technique, and engagement with human experience, the results inevitably suffer. Steele voices the legitimate complaint that many poets of the last few decades have done little more than parrot the surface characteristics of modern poetry:

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For several generations we have been living with a phenomenon which I have elsewhere called recycled novelty. In ever-narrower ways, the procedures and ideas of the modern movement have been appropriated and deployed as if they were still brand-new and untried. Unless we gain a more informed awareness of its liabilities as well as its admirable vitalities, we will continue to repeat its shortcomings without capturing its virtues.

Those shortcomings include prosaism, fragmentation, difficulty practiced for its own sake, highly mannered diction, and excessive concern with particulars at the expense of abstract thought—formulae that lesser poets quantify while adding little else but a sense of self-importance.

Steele does not indicate, however, that other poets may have risen above mere repetition of these shortcomings or used any of them to advantage; nor does he admit that the phenomenon he describes is not peculiarly modern, but one that naturally follows in the wake of great innovation (he cannot, of course, admit this because he refuses to define the moderns as innovators). Instead he insists that, with the revival of traditional versification, a higher degree of inspiration and attentiveness to human experience will replace barren reiteration of modernist conventions.

Steele therefore prescribes meter as a cure for the mediocrity of much contemporary poetry. But the majority of poetry written at any given time is mediocre; a poem that is steeped in the clichés of its age is no more acceptable, simply because it is written in meter, than a free verse poem that suffers from the same problem.

Steele does offer disclaimers. He "admires the moderns' devotion to poetry and their achievements" and, in his discussion of the distinction between verse and poetry, implicitly acknowledges that "fine poetry involves something much more than technical expertise"—"a richness of feeling, a startling justness of perception, or an impressive exposition of incident or idea." Yet his insistence that such qualities are most likely to be embodied by meter leads him to a radical polarization of metrical composition and free verse. According to Steele, free verse results in a wholly subjective poetry that is divorced from human experience, solipsistic, and therefore immoral; its adherents, who refuse to abide by universal standards of judgment, persistently indulge in irrationality and illusory novelty and, since they work from formulae rather than conscious awareness, are guilty of automatic writing. Steele does not admit that free verse can lead to anything other than these vices, and he never specifies the achievements of modern poetry, or even which poets, he so admires. Nor does he fully acknowledge that certain qualities he eschews—irrationality and subjectivity—can sometimes be favorable to composition, or that their contraries, in excess, can ever inhibit it. This polarization is partially the result of his decision to address the genesis of free verse solely on a theoretical level: by not discussing individual poems, or even specific kinds of free verse, he is forced to rely on broad generalizations. When he levels his many charges, Steele always attacks "some poets" who write in free verse, rather than all. Yet, since he never grants any positive attributes—nor even the potential for good—to free verse, he inevitably engages in a sweeping condemnation of its practitioners.

Missing Measures is, of course, intended as a strong counterweight to the hegemony of free verse and the doctrine of artistic autonomy that pervades contemporary poetry and, in particular, university writing programs. As he observes in his conclusion, "poets should be allowed to chart their own courses, whether these lead them to free verse or metrical verse." One wishes that Steele had, at least, granted some degree of legitimacy to poets who settle on a course that leads them to free verse. Though much free verse that is written today seems formless and undisciplined, he should not argue from species to genus and assume that all poems written in free verse are inherently formless. Poets who adopt free verse, like those who write in meter, make use of a wide range of rhetorical possibilities to give structure to their poems. Meter can be an important tool for poets, but it is not the only one.

Those who already agree with Steele will incline to his zeal and applaud his book. Unfortunately, readers whom he most wants to reach—writers and critics who shrug off meter as a bar to good writing, and young poets who do not consider meter a serious option in their own work—will be so put off by his staunch condemnation of free verse that they will be unable to learn from his more

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eloquent passages on the merits of meter. They will see Steele not as an heir of Dryden, but of Dryden's character Crites, who degrades the accomplishments of his contemporaries and immediate predecessors and insists on tradition merely for its own sake. Which is a pity, since some of Steele's points are quite cogent, and, through his advocacy of metrical composition, he offers a vital, bracing alternative for much contemporary poetry.

The Emperor's Old Clothes

CALIGULA: THE CORRUPTION OF POWER. *By Anthony A. Barrett. Yale University Press. $27.50.*

Reviewed by S. J. B. BARNISH

And simpler still the phobia, the perversion,
Such curiosa as tease humanistic,
Unpolitical palates.
—W. H. Auden

Every schoolboy once knew of the mad emperor who committed incest with his three sisters, proposed to make his racehorse a consul, aborted an invasion of Britain, ordering the troops to gather seashells on the Channel shore, was worshipped with sacrifices of peacocks and flamingos, but "found that he was not a god" under the sword of an idealistic and insulted officer. His reign, however, is usually passed over by historians—an eccentric interlude between the sober regimes of Tiberius and Claudius. Oxford undergraduates are seldom set an essay on it, and the last major study was Balsdon's *Emperor Gaius*, a rehabilitation published in 1934. Anthony Barrett's treatment, full, solid, and cautious, suggests a justified neglect. Like Balsdon, he argues that Caligula was neither fool nor madman: his image has been distorted by stereotyped imperial anecdotes, by misunderstandings, sometimes willful, of his acid jokes, and by the apologetics of those who survived him. Nonetheless (contrast Balsdon), he was an egocentric, irresponsible ruler, who showed

S. J. B. BARNISH has been a research fellow at the University of Wales and at Darwin College, Cambridge.

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few signs of constructive statesmanship—"probably any one of the 600 or so senators would have done no worse." However satisfying it may be to extend a current series of imperial biographies, does he then deserve some 350 pages?

If the emperor's reign was long, such books may be worth writing as narratives of Roman history; Caligula's was under four years (A.D. 37–41). (Barrett, though, gives two chapters to Caligula under Tiberius.) They can be justified if the period under discussion was marked by major historical change; but Barrett takes pains to show that Caligula's was not. They can be justified if much is known of the emperor's character and private life; but in Caligula's case, Barrett is skeptical. Finally, they are worthwhile if the biographer finds and develops some theme about the nature of politics and administration under the principate. Barrett states that his "primary aim has been to attempt a reconstruction of events," but that the opportunity "to identify significant trends . . . is limited in Caligula's reign." He has thought hard on the Gaetulicus and Lepidus conspiracies, and on Caligula in the north; he has deployed numismatic evidence and recent excavations on the Palatine. However, despite a long concluding assessment, the result is less a book than a sequence of articles, useful, scholarly, but unimaginative; it lacks a united argument. Barrett, though, has done something remarkable—he has made Caligula rather dull.

The ancients responded very differently to Caligula's mixture of wit, charm, cruelty, unpredictability, and extravagant display. The range of sources—Jewish and Roman, historical and philosophical—shows that they never found him a bore. Barrett rightly says "at the heart of any study of Caligula's reign is the problem of the literary sources," but he shows small interest in them, although perceptions of the emperor, contemporary and subsequent, might have integrated his work. His use of them is both too incautious and too skeptical. At the start of Nero's reign, it was said, Seneca dreamed he was tutor to Caligula; Barrett has failed to study the possiblity of mutual influence in the sources for these two young emperors. (There are interesting parallels between plots against them.) However, the sources show Caligula as extraordinary: he surpasses Nero in his extravagance and wanton desire to shock, Domitian in his claims to worship. Cruelty and whimsicality distinguish him, as dissimulation does Tiberius. No other "bad emperor" is accused of insanity (save Nero by Josephus), no other so sharply divided by Suetonius—"so much for the *princeps*; now for the monster." These traits are not stereotypes.

Another clue missed, or insufficiently exploited by Barrett, is related: reaction to the emperor at his accession. The Senate too readily voted him en bloc the powers that Tiberius had accumulated gradually under Augustus; the novelty turned his head. Stressing the significance of this for Caligula, Barrett fails to explore it for the early principate in general: how far and why did men accept (and oppose) autocracy?

Before the vote, Caligula already held the levers of state. To judge by Tacitus's later vagueness on the accession of Tiberius, senators were losing interest in the Augustan veils of monarchy; formalities were insignificant, the autocrat's character all-important—how to understand, manipulate, mold, or embarrass him. Seneca held up to Nero a mirror of morality, one for an absolute despot, not a first magistrate; for him, I suspect, Caligula's reign was formative. Caligula allegedly combined Stoic genetic theory with the pride of a Roman noble to claim transcendent political genius as his heritage. Under Nero, Seneca remarked that the gods might reward ancestral virtue by bestowing empire on worthless descendants. Did Caligula, the first emperor by inheritance only, arouse debate, at once aristocratic and philosophical, on the theory of the principate? He executed the Roman Stoic Canius. Was the "Stoic Opposition" beginning to emerge?

The Senate voted partly under mob pressure; Philo and others record the empire-wide enthusiasm at the time, and the fear and grief felt by all classes during Caligula's severe illness a few months later; the plebeians were to lament his murder—they were left defenseless against senatorial tyranny. Fear of civil war was widespread in the early empire. As a basis for monarchy, it joined with the Hellenistic ideal of Alexander, of the youthful, godlike leader and savior. The young Pompey had exploited that image; Augustus boasted "at the age of 19 . . . I raised an army to defend the liberty of the state," and groomed for power a series of glamorous, ill-fated juve-

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niles. Germanicus epitomized the type; his son Caligula inherited his aura. Senatorial structure and traditions favored the age and experience to which Tiberius had done small credit. However, the Romans (especially, but not only, the plebeians) hankered after young heroes—Caligula sometimes resented it.

Caligula saved his subjects from political chaos; he also delivered them from unresponsive autocracy. Tiberius had isolated himself on Capri from embassies, petitioners, place-seekers, an emperor's myriad stimuli to action. From that ogre's castle, Prince Charming descended on Rome, affable, energetic, and accessible—to face the inevitable rivalry, social and political, of men who likewise claimed power as a family heirloom. Eliminating Tiberius's grandson Gemellus, he put the succession up for grabs. The results were conspiracies and mutual suspicion, gross competitive extravagance, cultivation of the plebeians (like Augustus in 23–19 B.C.) as a counterweight to the Senate, and a distancing of the Julian *gens* from its peers by the honors paid to the Princess Drusilla. Caligula's claim to direct descent from Augustus by incest with Julia may belong in this context. So too some of his religious antics. Men honored Capitoline Jove like an emperor, surrounding him with household attendants and legal petitioners. As herdsman of the noblest flock, humanity, the emperor himself claimed divinity. His notorious rivalry with the god raised him above the sphere of aristocratic competition. No wonder his murderers "could not tolerate a man who could not tolerate Jupiter."

From a "good emperor," honors and petitions drew almost automatic responses. Caligula's studied "outrageousness" may be another reaction to the constraints of accessibility. As Dio notes, in their different ways Tiberius and Caligula were deliberately and frighteningly unpredictable. To senators, though, "inappropriate" behavior meant either stupidity, as with Claudius, or insanity. Caligula lacked the politician's sense of the possible, and disastrously insulted even his guard commanders; madness, maybe, but was there no method in it? Barrett shows him as all too conscious of supreme power, but fails to convey the beating of the eagle's wings against the cage of expectation and convention.

Suetonius's sketch of a tormented autocrat pacing the corridors of his palace, and crying desperately for the dawn, implies other tragedies, enacted not only in the torture chamber, but in the minds of his subjects. Financial mismanagement, military incompetence, and a reign of terror—Barrett plays down all these charges against Caligula. Others have done so for Domitian. At least on the third charge, this is wasted labor; such emperors inspired Tacitus's *Annals*, that guilty and embittered portrait of a ruling class under tyranny, Rome's parallel to *Darkness at Noon.*

Caligula's was a regime, then, of fear and of passionate experiments with a political structure still new, and never well defined. Had it positive achievements? Mauretania was annexed; provinces and client states were prudently organized, and good appointments made; discipline and security were restored on the Rhine—an unfinished job, well discussed by Barrett. Not since 16–13 B.C. had an emperor visited the legions and the provinces. Most interesting are Caligula's Gallic visit and projected eastern tour, his planned invasion of Britain (postponed, Barrett argues, thanks to trouble on the Rhine), and the favor shown to knights from all over the empire. Some of the religious theater, I suspect, was devised for Greek and Gallo-German galleries. Much of this prepared the ground for Claudius and later emperors, but how much was Caligula's initiative, and how much evoked by provincials who recalled Germanicus, darling of East and West? Who was ruler, empire or emperor?

To his death, provincial reactions are not recorded—save the Jewish. Long afterwards, Josephus reproduced the fullest account of the murder; did he see in that vain attempt to restore senatorial freedom a parallel to his people's tragedy? (Caligula proposed to erect his statue in the Temple; his reign showed the vulnerability of both Jews and senators.) It was a deed heavy with symbols, enacted while plays of brigandage and mythical incest were staged at the games of the divine Augustus, a century from the fateful consulship of Caesar. Killing Caligula's wife and daughter, the conspirators exterminated Caesar's house, only to have their coup hijacked by Claudius, who may have abetted it; behind him, the army fell into line. Polybius's theory of constitutional cycles was familiar in Rome: a hereditary monarchy that forfeited assent was tyranny; aristocracy would be restored by its

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noble and insulted subjects. But the Augustan ship of monarchy rocked without capsizing; it was ballasted by the loyalty and interests of the ordinary soldier; only its too-daring pilot was flung overboard. Seneca was instead to take over an organic theory of history: senile Rome was now supported by the imperial wheelchair.

The Finest Soldier

GENERAL OF THE ARMY: GEORGE C. MARSHALL, SOLDIER AND STATESMAN. *By Ed Cray. Norton. $35.*

Reviewed by JOHN M. TAYLOR

Dean Acheson has told how George C. Marshall, newly named to be secretary of state, set aside time for the obligatory formal portrait, making himself available for several sittings. When the portrait was done, Marshall gathered his belongings to leave. Asked by the artist if he wanted to see the picture, Marshall declined. Why should he have wanted to see the painting? He had been expected to sit for one and had dutifully complied.

To Acheson, this episode epitomized Marshall as the selfless public servant, devoid of ego. Others felt much as Acheson did. President Truman considered him the greatest living American. James B. Conant regarded Marshall as the only American worthy of being linked with George Washington. Eric Sevareid saw Marshall as "a hulking, homely man of towering intellect, the memory of an unnatural genius, and the integrity of a Christian saint. The atmosphere of controlled power he exuded made one feel oneself a physical weakling."

Although Marshall would win the Nobel Peace Prize for his contribution to European recovery while secretary of state, he was first and last a soldier. When it became clear to the young George Marshall that his father's Democratic politics precluded an appointment to West Point from their Republican district of Pennsylvania, Marshall went instead to Virginia Military Institute. There he was an indifferent student, but he passed four years within sight of the graves of Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee. For the rest of his life he would be a soldier and a Virginian.

Marshall saw action as a junior officer in the Philippine insurrection, but for the most part the years leading up to World War I were for him tedious. By the age of thirty-four, he had spent five years as a second lieutenant and nine more as a first lieutenant. Then came war. In France, Marshall was chief of staff of the First Division when he caught Pershing's eye with a vigorous defense of his division commander whom Pershing had harshly criticized. A few weeks later the commanding general tapped Marshall for his own staff. In the view of Ed Cray, whose previous books include a history of General Motors, Marshall's service in World War I was an essential part of his career development. "His service with troops had taught him the alternating boredom and terror that was the combat infantryman's life. At the same time, as a staff officer he had gained a larger perspective, one that permitted him knowing judgments on both the principles of command and public policy."

Although Marshall was recognized as one of the army's most promising officers, the army after World War I was so shrunken that he came close to being retired as a colonel. In what appears to have been his only campaign on his own behalf, Marshall, in 1934, asked Pershing to call his efficiency reports to the attention of the secretary of war. "As I will soon be fifty-four," he wrote, "I must get started if I am going anywhere in the Army." Two years later, Marshall received his first star.

Having salvaged his career, Marshall began a meteoric rise. Tapped as deputy chief of staff by General Malin Craig, Marshall urged a reduction in size of the standard army division from four to three brigades. Impressed with the bomber's potential, Marshall supported appropriations for the fledgling Army Air Corps. Although still a junior brigadier, he was regarded as a strong contender to succeed Craig. This time no campaigning was re-

✪ JOHN M. TAYLOR is the author of several biographies. A paperback reprint of his *General Maxwell Taylor: The Sword and the Pen* and a new biography of William H. Seward will appear in 1991.

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quired. Marshall had strong support not only from Pershing and Craig but also from Harry Hopkins in the White House, with whom Marshall had worked on Civilian Conservation Corps matters. In 1939, Marshall was promoted over thirty-three more senior generals to be chief of staff. For once, the "system" had worked.

George Marshall's reputation rests primarily on his services as an organizer and strategist in the conflagration that was World War II. In collaboration with an able colleague, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, Marshall was responsible for organizing and equipping what became a ninety-division army of some nine million men. Virtually all the principal generals—Eisenhower, Bradley, Clark, Stilwell—were handpicked by Marshall from his encyclopedic knowledge of the army's professionals; only MacArthur was a law unto himself. Cray's book is revealing in its description of how Marshall supported Eisenhower in his first insecure months as commander of the European theater.

Marshall was more than a logistician, however, for he was Roosevelt's principal strategic adviser. Of all the Allied leaders, he and Churchill could alone be said to have a truly global perspective—but this did not lead them to similar strategies in prosecuting the war. Marshall was a leading proponent of the cross-channel strategy against Germany, as opposed to the British strategy for a campaign in the Mediterranean and through Italy. Senior British officers such as Alanbrooke and Alexander, who often took a patronizing view of their American counterparts, could not patronize George Marshall.

Marshall's relations with Franklin D. Roosevelt underwent a metamorphosis during the war years. Earlier, Marshall had viewed the president with skepticism, deploring his tendency to gloss over problems and to ignore tables of organization. He seemed puzzled and even repelled by a president who temporized and bantered, and he flatly refused to cultivate Roosevelt's friendship. Marshall's view began to change as he saw Roosevelt make hard decisions, including one that General Wainwright must continue his hopeless fight on Corregidor. Marshall would tell a later biographer, "I decided [Roosevelt] was a great man."

Marshall played a prominent role in a suc-

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cession of wartime conferences—Casablanca, Quebec, Tehran, Cairo, and Yalta—involving Roosevelt, Churchill, and sometimes Stalin. One of Cray's skills as a biographer is that he manages to retain the reader's interest through a succession of strategy debates that otherwise might tend to blur. Marshall was aided through most of the war by his friendship with Field Marshal Sir John Dill, the largely forgotten chief of the British military mission in Washington, whose respect for Marshall led him to pass to the Americans copies of sensitive British documents.

It was widely assumed that Marshall would command the invasion of Europe in 1944. At the Cairo and Tehran conferences, however, Roosevelt, who had heretofore favored Marshall's appointment, became disturbed at the thought of his chief of staff's absence from Washington. When Marshall refused to press his own case, the appointment went to Eisenhower. In the final year of the war, Marshall oversaw U.S. military production, urged the development of the atomic bomb, and sought to assure that, while the main Allied effort continued to be in Europe, MacArthur and Stilwell received an adequate share of supplies.

The end of the war did not bring Marshall his longed-for retirement. Truman, who admired the general even more than Roosevelt had, enlisted Marshall in a doomed attempt to mediate between the Communists and the Chiang government in China. In January 1947 Truman appointed Marshall secretary of state, a post that he held for two years.

Marshall's contributions as secretary of state have not always received proper recognition. He brought some degree of order to a department that had long been a collection of personal fiefdoms. He established the first Policy Planning Staff. But he is best remembered for his role in developing the European Recovery Program (ERP), which became known as the Marshall Plan. Marshall correctly maintained that the ERP was a group endeavor, but it was Marshall who insisted that the United States offer aid to Eastern Europe as well as to the West. Moscow, of course, rejected the American offer.

In September 1950, after a brief period as president of the American Red Cross, Marshall was again called out of retirement to be Truman's secretary of defense. This was not Marshall's finest hour. He campaigned unsuccessfully for universal military training. Reared in a tradition of not interfering with theater commanders, Marshall did little more than observe while MacArthur, in the first year of the Korean War, crossed the thirty-eighth parallel and enlarged the scope of the war to a point where China chose to intervene. When Truman decided to sack MacArthur, he had the support of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but Marshall concurred only reluctantly. His final months in office were marred by bitter attacks from the Republican "primitives," led by Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, who insisted that the U.S. Army's failure to capture Berlin, the collapse of Chiang Kai-shek, and the removal of MacArthur were somehow Marshall's fault. The general never answered his critics.

Throughout his career, Marshall managed to break many of the rules. He rose to the top of his profession without the benefit of either the West Point cachet or significant combat experience. He was blunt with his superiors to the point of rudeness, telling Truman, for instance, that he not only opposed the proposed recognition of Israel, but that if he were disposed to vote he would vote Republican on that account. Yet such episodes only impressed Marshall's listeners with his integrity.

Marshall refused to write his memoirs, but cooperated with historian Forrest C. Pogue in what became, after Marshall's death, a four-volume authorized biography that is a model of that vanishing genre. What Ed Cray has now provided is a substantial, 730-page volume that will meet the requirements of most readers. On occasion, we could do with a bit more analysis from Cray. Did Marshall really believe that an invasion of France in 1942 could succeed, or was he merely reflecting Roosevelt's desire that the United States employ its ground forces in Europe that year? Most authorities believe that green American troops would have fared badly on the Continent without the experience that they were to gain in North Africa. Nevertheless, we may not see a better single-volume biography of Marshall than *General of the Army.*

For all the author's skill, however, Marshall's personality continues to remain elusive and a bit forbidding. His only recreations were horseback riding and gardening—two hobbies best carried on in solitude. He rarely

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bothered to explain his decisions and had no regard for the sensibilities of associates; he once told Acheson, "I have no feelings except those I reserve for Mrs. Marshall." Yet Marshall was deeply upset by the unexpected death of his first wife and by the death in World War II of a stepson, Allen. During a wartime visit to Italy, Marshall insisted on flying over the highway where Allen had been killed by a sniper's bullet.

Marshall was fortunate in having served at a time when his virtues were appreciated not only by his colleagues but by the country at large. The general never had to deal with draft-card burners, charges of sexual harassment, or leaks of sensitive papers to the *New York Times*. Cray notes that a press conference in Marshall's office "took on the atmosphere of a papal audience." Sam Donaldson's media generation had not yet arrived.

Near the end of the war, Churchill called Marshall "the true organizer of victory." Secretary of War Stimson told him that although he had known many soldiers in his lifetime, "You, sir, are the finest soldier I have ever known." Readers of this thoughtful biography are likely to reach similar conclusions, without necessarily wishing that they could have sat next to Marshall at dinner.

Footsteps

COLERIDGE: EARLY VISIONS. *By Richard Holmes. Viking. $22.95.*

Reviewed by PETER SCHWENDENER

This book is the first of two volumes, the second of which will be entitled *Later Reflections*. Its aim is to follow Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "living footsteps through the world" up to the time of his trip to Malta in 1804, when he was thirty-one. This includes the Coleridge of the best-known poetry, such as "Kubla Khan," *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and the Conversation Poems ("Frost at Midnight," "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," and others), yet only indirectly the author of *Biographia Literaria* (1817), *Aids to Reflection* (1825), or other later prose.

Holmes consolidates most of the known facts of Coleridge's early life. Born October 21, 1772, in Ottery St. Mary, Devonshire, he was the youngest of fourteen children. His father, the Reverend John Coleridge, was an occasional contributor to *Gentleman's Magazine* and, in addition to publishing a Latin grammar and other scholarly works, wrote a play called *The Fair Barbarian*, which he sent to David Garrick at Drury Lane. He died when Coleridge was nine, and shortly after his death Coleridge was sent to Christ's Hospital grammar school in London where he met another minister, the Reverend James Bowyer. Bowyer, a reputed sadist, had a deep if ambivalent effect on Coleridge, who had nightmares about him throughout his life yet also thanked him, in the *Biographia*, for some of his first serious thoughts about poetry. Bowyer taught him principles, he said, or "that Poetry, even that of the loftiest and, seemingly, that of the wildest odes, had a logic of its own, as severe as that of science; and more difficult, because more subtle, more complex, and dependent on more, and more fugitive causes."

Coleridge was a "Grecian" at Christ's Hospital, or one of a select group of students who were expected to go to Cambridge or Oxford. At Cambridge, where he went when he was nineteen, he won a poetry prize for "Ode on the Slave Trade" and became, as Richard Holmes writes, "renowned throughout the university for brilliant classical scholarship, flamboyant talk, and peculiar political views." The politics were those of the so-called "English Jacobins" or sympathizers with French revolutionary politics such as William Godwin, "Citizen" John Thelwall, and William Frend. Frend was a tutor and mathematician at Cambridge who was tried for blasphemy in 1794, and Coleridge became one of his partisans. His studies withstood most of his extracurricular activities, but in 1793, his third year, he irrationally decided to join the army. He joined the Fifteenth Light Dragoons under the name of Silas Tomkyn Comberbache and was rescued four months later by his brother George, who paid to have him discharged.

Coleridge returned to Cambridge, where he, Robert Southey, and other young radicals

✪ PETER SCHWENDENER, a former staff writer for the Chicago *Reader*, has also written for *Tri-Quarterly* magazine.

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initiated the scheme of pantisocracy. Originally called "pantocracy," it was a movement of social reform that was supposed to realize itself in the form of an ideal settlement on the banks of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania. Though it never got to America, it resulted in Coleridge's marriage to Sara Fricker, Southey's sister-in-law. (Coleridge had been in love once before, with Mary Evans, while he was at Cambridge.) The marriage involved genuine attraction on both sides, yet it also took place because pantisocracy insisted that the settlers of the new colony be couples. Sara valued "traditional domesticity," as Holmes writes, while Coleridge in his pantisocratic phase maintained "the ideal of wives as the 'free and equal companions' of their husbands, and the feminist views of Mary Wollstonecraft."

Holmes partly relieves the sense of bleakness associated with their marriage by stressing how calm and productive it was in the years when their first son, Hartley, was born and Coleridge did some of his best writing. He met Wordsworth's sister-in-law, Sara Hutchinson, in 1799 and fell in love with her. Yet he seems never to have thought of divorce, though he separated from his wife in 1806. Pantisocracy failed, or collapsed as a scheme, in 1795, but as he grew older, Coleridge never patronized or intellectually disowned it. In an essay he wrote in 1809 in *The Friend,* a short-lived periodical he founded, he thanked pantisocracy for "much of whatever I at present possess, my clearest insight into the nature of individual Man, and my most comprehensive views of his social relations" (it reminds one a little of his thanking Bowyer for "insight," however painfully acquired, into poetry).

Coleridge left Cambridge in 1794 without taking a degree and, following his marriage, began lecturing on radical political subjects and publishing *The Watchman,* a journal devoted to "Science, Freedom and the Truth in Christ." Coleridge, as Holmes notes, was always set apart from the "Jacobins" or France-inspired left by his religious views: "Unlike Paine or Godwin, he never appeals to 'the Rights of Man', but always to a fundamentalist view of 'Christ's teaching' about wealth, property, temporal power, and the brotherhood of man." He was an ingratiating lecturer, though a reviewer of one of his published speeches thought it was less the work of a political thinker than of "a young man who possesses a poetical imagination."

At Cambridge Coleridge first took opium, apparently to relieve a toothache, and started taking it again shortly after he was married. In 1797 he moved from Bristol to Nether Stowey to indicate by a country residence his "deliberate rejection of any conventional career in literature or journalism." He visited Wordsworth, whom he had met briefly in 1795, at Racedown; Dorothy Wordsworth, whose descriptions were never careless or inflationary, wrote to a friend:

> At first I thought him very plain, that is, for about three minutes; he is pale and thin, has a wide mouth, thick lips, and not very good teeth, longish loose-growing half-curling rough black hair. But if you hear him speak for five minutes you think no more of them.

"This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," "Kubla Khan," *Christabel,* and *The Ancient Mariner* were all written while he was at Nether Stowey. Coleridge's belief in the failure of his poetic powers that seems actually to have occurred around the end of the century comes, as it should, to dominate this account of the first half of his life. It was a partial failure in that he wrote poetry on and off for the rest of his life, none of which, as Holmes shows by quoting much of it, is without interest. He maintained, however, as he wrote to a friend, that "The Poet" was "dead" in him, and writing about Coleridge has since the time of his death divided itself among those who more or less agree with him and those who choose, for a variety of reasons, to humor his account of his "failure" and consider, as Holmes does, the amount of work he actually achieved after dying as a poet.

This aspect of *Early Visions,* or its ability to humor rather than reproduce myths about Coleridge, makes it unusual as an example of "popular narrative biography," which is how it describes itself. It is popularly written in that it avoids academic controversy, yet it does this without shunning complexity. It is, in short, a rather Coleridgean book in that it covers large amounts of depressive, even horrible subject matter without itself being painful or oppressive to read. About the letter to William Godwin in which Coleridge professes to have "died" as a poet, Holmes

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writes, in an argument that might strike some as special pleading, that throughout the letter "the talk of loss and failure is consistently contradicted by the excitement and spontaneity of the leaping rhythms and metaphors. Coleridge finds his salvation in the irrepressible life of language itself."

Coleridge's poetry has never needed the complicated defense his prose often requires. The power of "language itself," as Holmes calls it, is most apparent, perhaps, in *The Ancient Mariner*, where a cosmic sense of "failure" or of being out of place in the world becomes almost domestic or cozy by virtue of the imagery it assumes. Southey called it "a Dutch attempt at German sublimity" and thought he was being funny, while Charles Lamb, responding to Southey's criticism, said, "You have selected a passage fertile in unmeaning miracles, but have passed by some fifty passages as miraculous as the miracles they celebrate." The Conversation Poems, if not his "finest poetic achievement" as Holmes feels they are, at least are examples of poetry fulfilling his own requirement that it idealize physical objects without compromising their appeal to the senses. "Frost at Midnight," for instance, shows ordinary or domestic articles raised to the status of symbols at little expense to their ordinariness:

> . . . the thin blue flame
> Lies on my low-burnt fire, and quivers not;
> Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
> Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.

The humorist in Coleridge is not allowed, in this account, to sink under the dignified weight of his status as "Logician, Metaphysician, Bard!" to use the trio of terms Lamb half-seriously applied to him. His sense of humor is acutely verbal, as in this detail from a road adventure:

> I enquired my road at a Cottage—and on lifting up the latch beheld a tall old Hag, whose soul-gelding Ugliness would chill to eternal chastity a cantharidized Satyr—However an Angel of Light could not have been more civil.

The *Notebooks* especially, which Holmes makes good use of, show a variety of moods and reveal Coleridge's gift for minute, at times even boring, description of natural phenomena; according to Holmes, he was "per-

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haps the first writer to recognize 'weather' as a subject in itself (both in the day and at night)."

The one thing that can be said about Coleridge's writing, apart from the still-disputed matter of the "unity" of his works, is that it is unquestionably of a piece. A current of ideal force, or some ability of language to raise things from the rut of familiar associations, runs even through his marginalia, suggesting a power that "blessed him unawares," to use a phrase that really seems to fit the case. His doctrine of the creative imagination remains a kind of Try-Your-Strength Machine for critics, all of whom would like to see how much of their own meaning they can make it absorb; swinging the mallet after reading Holmes's admirable book, I'd say that "language itself," or the ability of words to restore to life something it literally needs to go on, was what his concept of "the imagination" was most consciously intended by him to celebrate.

What the Hedgehog Knows

THE THREAT AND THE GLORY. *By P. B. Medawar. HarperCollins. $22.50.*

Reviewed by MARTIN LEBOWITZ

The story version of the hedgehog and the fox employed by Isaiah Berlin as the title of his book on Tolstoy and Joseph de Maistre is highly applicable to this volume by P. B. Medawar: the fox knows many things while the hedgehog knows but one big thing. The point is that the growth of science during the past few centuries, most notably our own, has yielded a highly multifarious approach not only to the sciences but to methodology itself. Medawar's favorite philosophers are David Hume and Sir Karl Popper. Hume of course refuted the notion of purely inductive knowledge completely dissociated from speculative assumptions, preconceptions, expectations—in short, pre-existing beliefs. Karl Popper endorses the view that science and technology are incomparably the most successful endeavors human beings have ever engaged in.

Yet Popper, like Hume, showed that the law of causality and the principle of the uniformity of nature, most notably in the social sciences, are not based upon reason but upon faith—a mere habit of expectation. Like Medawar himself, Popper's philosophy of science grows out of a consideration of how scientists indeed go about their work of enlarging human knowledge. Again, this is not a straightforward process of inductive reasoning but something pluralistic, inspired by intuition, speculation, and insight or *theoria*—in short, the hypothetical-deductive method that prevails, quite consciously and self-consciously, in the actual work of science.

Medawar notes that two things undermine the belief in inductive reasoning: error and luck; neither, obviously, would occur in the event that the procedures of induction were an infallible calculus for achieving truth. On the contrary, this is a matter for the pragmatic spirit to determine; and it is far from an accident that the pragmatic spirit is also the spirit of pluralism. Medawar points out that methodology in this sense is a profoundly liberating influence; indeed, methodology in the sense here described is part and parcel of the liberalism of our time, and may, indeed, be its central and basic component. Clearly, the relativistic tendencies of thought in our age are implicit in the methodological considerations outlined above.

The history and progress of science illustrate the function and necessity of the hypothetical-deductive method. It was a writer on science named Norman Campbell who pointed out many years ago that the methods of science are applicable to the physical or material world but not to the subject matter of psychology and sociology. Popper abandons the pursuit of apodeictic certainty in both spheres—proposing that scientific knowledge as such is purely conjectural—but he goes so far as to say that historical propositions are inherently unpredictable. Physics, chemistry, physiology, and the other sciences do have a pragmatic certainty, and their subject matters comprise the respective sciences; but the same cannot be said of history and sociology. In earlier ages the great idealists Plato and Hegel (and to a lesser extent Kant) regarded scientific understanding as an expression of the immanence of objective reality within human mentality or human nature: human mentality and the universe of nature are ulti-

MARTIN LEBOWITZ's book reviews have appeared in the *Kenyon Review*, the *Yale Review*, and other publications.

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mately or in principle interchangeable. This view has been carried forward in our own century by Alfred North Whitehead, who very astutely transforms the system of objective idealism into the philosophy of organism, a functional concretion of the Hegelian system or dialectic of ideas, in accordance with the temper of our *own* age.

Obviously, the pluralism or multiplicity of scientific methods is associated with an analogous view of factuality or truth. Medawar illustrates the connection by showing how discrete, partial, concrete, and atomistic is the search for objectivity in science. Problems as such are in the nature of the case finite and *incomplete, just as is the method of experimentation* itself. There is also an element of contingency in every scientific conclusion: F. H. Bradley, like Whitehead, implies that certainty—certain knowledge—requires an infinitude of necessary factual considerations.

In Medawar's essay "The Future of Man," he remarks:

> I first thought of attempting a grand prophetic statement about man's future . . . of doing for biology something of the kind that physicists have done when they have written about the shape of the foreseeable future or of what might happen in the next million years; but I soon saw that if I were to attempt anything of the kind on behalf of biology, I should be obliged either to weary you with endless qualifications and reservations and disclaimers, or else try to disguise the thinness of the reasoning by taking refuge in apocalyptic prose.

Thus Medawar concludes that not only eugenic breeding toward some highly desired end but also any planned effort to control or direct evolution would deprive life of too many of the qualities that make it worth having. Besides, and most important, speculation on the subject of eugenic breeding and the control of evolution is too hypothetical and unscientific to allow the probability of success.

P. B. Medawar, who died in 1987, suffered a succession of strokes before his death. He was thus familiar from a patient's point of view with catastrophic medical problems. He includes a brief essay at the conclusion of this book on questions concerning the dignity of dying. Medawar believed that the support of life is not equivalent to the "prolongation of dying" and that "there is more dignity and strength in making a fight for life than in a passive abdication." Unfortunately, it comes about for each of us that there is a time when the exertions of effort toward survival are indeed less dignified than the alternatives. Medawar denounces the Freudian principle of Thanatos, yet the impersonal, objective, altruistic element in nature is among the noblest forms of self-denial. Evidently Medawar took evolutionary principles too seriously.

The title of the book derives from an essay in which Medawar affirms that the threat and the glory of science is that in principle everything possible can be done if the intention to do it is sufficiently resolute. The author notes that "it has come to be felt that there is some *essential malefaction about the progress of* science and technology: that they lurch forward like some great Behemoth trampling down in its pathway almost everything that makes for civilized life." Obviously, there is something terrifying about the character of illimitable expectation as such, and it is as just such an entity that science has entered into our consciousness and our psychology. But it is the tremendous impression on our culture that science has achieved that is responsible for these negative feelings. Science has not only de-personalized culture and society to a significant degree, but it has also led to a ruthlessness in the pursuit of scientific truth that has affected motivation in other areas, particularly in the pursuit of other forms of truth. As T. S. Eliot remarked, the eclipse of religion has brought forth stranger gods worshipped with even greater intensity and ferocity.

Just the Perfect Blendship

THE FIVE OF HEARTS: AN INTIMATE PORTRAIT OF HENRY ADAMS AND HIS FRIENDS, 1880–1918. *By Patricia O'Toole. Clarkson Potter/Crown. $25.*

Reviewed by LARRY DOWNES

What is it about Henry Adams? This wealthy, aloof, and cantankerous Brahmin had such contempt for the reading public that his

✪ LARRY DOWNES is a law student at the University of Chicago.

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major work, *The Education of Henry Adams,* was only published posthumously. Nonetheless, he has attracted a noisy following among every succeeding generation of readers and writers. Adams has been the object of near obsession by such diverse personalities as R. P. Blackmur and Ezra Pound (who carried on almost daily about him and his brother Brooks Adams in his radio speeches from Fascist Italy), and he figures prominently in the battles between Gore Vidal and Norman Podhoretz. John Cheever once called him a "favorite uncle." He has been the subject of several literary biographies, including Ernest Samuels's three-volume Pulitzer Prize-winning study, and is thus far the most-reprinted author in the Library of America series. Casual readers of Adams's autobiographical *Education* must wonder what these writers and scholars find fascinating about a man so cold and formal that he wrote about himself in the third person, and who, in telling his life story, skipped the twenty years that included his marriage. One of the many services Patricia O'Toole has performed in *The Five of Hearts*—a collective biography of Adams, his wife Marian Hooper, John and Clara Hay, and Clarence King—is to create a vivid portrait of Adams as a man of powerful emotions and considerable social charms, all of which may help explain the interest of Henry Adams's readers.

"The Five of Hearts" (named in honor of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's group "The Five of Clubs") came together during the winter of 1880–81 in the house that Henry and Marian Adams were renting on H Street in Washington, D.C., across from the White House. They had tea at five o'clock every day, and often continued talking well into the night. Although they were rarely together again as a group, a bond among them was formed that lasted the rest of their lives.

The Adamses were escaping from Harvard, where Henry Adams had lectured on history. Between daily horseback rides in Rock Creek Park and intense social commitments, he was working on what would eventually be a ten-volume history of the United States. This work, which covered the years between the reigns of his great-grandfather John and grandfather John Quincy, is still regarded as a classic of American history. His wife Marian, another Bostonian, presided over the most exclusive salon in Washington. She had a sharp mind and an even sharper tongue, but she was mentally unstable and prone to deep depressions.

John and Clara Hay were in many respects the opposites of the Adamses. Hay had come from Illinois to serve as a secretary to Lincoln (he and his friend John Nicolay would later write a ten-volume biography of their boss), and he breezed in and out of power for the rest of his life while Adams perpetually complained about being "powerless" and a mere "stablemate to statesmen." Hay was not wealthy, but he had married extremely well in Clara Stone, whose father, a railroad tycoon and a founder of Case Western Reserve, embraced Hay as a replacement for his dead son. Clara Hay was as domestic as Marian was worldly, and while in Washington she pined for her native Cleveland and contented herself to listening while the other Hearts wittily talked the nights away.

The fifth member, Clarence King, is not well known today, but during his life he was famous for his geological explorations of the fortieth parallel (he founded the U.S. Geological Survey) and his exposure of a fraudulent diamond mine. His book, *Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada,* captivated the bookish Adams and Hay, who worshipped their adventurous and entrepreneurial friend long after his luck and fame ran out. Perhaps their adoration encouraged King's ruinous weakness for Mexican silver mines.

Patricia O'Toole has brought to light some wonderful details about these extraordinary people. For example, after the suicide of Marian Adams in 1885 had left Henry alone in the H. H. Richardson mansion they had built on Lafayette Square, O'Toole tells us how "Uncle Henry" began a daily ritual of noon breakfasts that attracted the capital's most glittering and brilliant figures. In 1889, the regulars at these breakfasts included the Hays, the Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (who had been one of Adams's graduate students at Harvard), and a new arrival to Washington, Theodore Roosevelt, who had been appointed by President Harrison to the Civil Service Commission.

Even in 1889 these were all published authors and important men, but the scene is more remarkable in the context of what the future held for them: Hay would go on to

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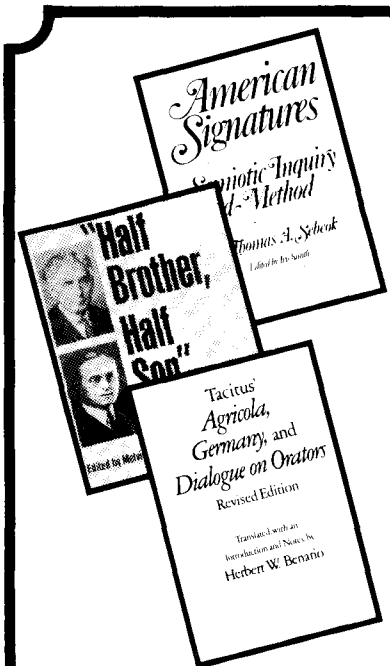
serve as ambassador to England, and then as secretary of state under McKinley and Roosevelt; Lodge, as leader of the conservative Republicans, would become Hay's leading foreign policy adversary; of Theodore Roosevelt, nothing need be said. The breakfast club also included Lodge's wife, Anna, with whom Hay conducted a long and very secret love affair, and Elizabeth Sherman Cameron, the young wife of one senator and the niece of another, for whom Adams himself suffered a tortured, probably unconsummated romantic interest for the rest of his life.

O'Toole also tells of the fastidious Adams driving H. H. Richardson nearly mad during the construction of his and Hay's adjoining houses (the costs seem to go up dramatically each time Adams sends one of his terse yet pompous notes to the architect, who rushes to finish the project when he discovers Adams developing a taste for the Gothic style); Mrs. Adams inadvertently shaking hands with James Garfield's assassin, mistaking him for a prison official; Clarence King explaining to his common-law wife in Brooklyn—a black nursemaid he met at a dinner party—that he needed to be away most of the time because he was a train porter; and John Hay's recurring gift to Republican presidents of a signet ring with a few locks of George Washington's hair.

The Five of Hearts goes well beyond the five intimates. The Hearts' outer circle was remarkably wide, and Miss O'Toole makes an admirable effort to weave into her text the lives of the politicians, writers, editors, painters, sculptors, and architects whom the Hearts called friends. The index reads like a Who's Who of the late nineteenth century and includes Henry James, H. H. Richardson, John La Farge, Sanford White, Whitelaw Reid, W. D. Howells, Mark Twain, E. L. Godkin, Henry Holt, Bret Harte, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, and Robert Louis Stevenson. ("Hang it," says the Henry Adams stand-in in Henry James's thinly veiled story, "Pandora," of the Adams's salon, "let us be vulgar and have some fun—let us invite the President.") They were acquainted—and often more—with eight different presidents, and their friends included numerous senators, cabinet members, foreign diplomats, and even a few congressmen (a bit of slumming here).

While not overly gossipy, *The Five of*



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Hearts describes the love lives of the Hearts with details that more academic biographers would perhaps have precluded, and the book does so without resorting to dreary psychobabble. The affairs of the Hearts that O'Toole treats are not new (with the possible exception of Hay's affair with Anna Lodge, which goes unmentioned in Ernest Samuels's standard biography of Adams), but she gives the lovers considerably more room to declare themselves, adding greatly to our sense of these figures as human beings. Her sources for this work are almost exclusively letters—here she makes her best use of *The Letters of Henry Adams*, the definitive six-volume collection published in 1983 (she is one of the first writers to use this source), as well as the unpublished letters of Hay and King.

One entire chapter is devoted to Adams's correspondence with Mrs. Cameron, from which Miss O'Toole stands back coolly and lets the two relive their pained dialogue. A mix-up in their carefully choreographed meetings, for example, led Mrs. Cameron to write to Adams, "I had no idea *that* was to be our goodbye. I was furious." He responds, "I am really annoyed that you thought my good-bye abrupt, and had no idea it was to come then." After several pages of this exchange, one feels sympathy for both lovers, and perhaps even fondness for the telephone, which has undoubtedly made this sort of replay impossible for twentieth-century lovers.

Even the depth of feeling Adams, Hay, and King expressed to one another is revealing and all the more remarkable, given our stereotypes of Victorian manners. King calls Hay "the dearest friend I ever had or ever shall on earth," and counts him, with his mother, as one of the two people "for whom I have the most feeling." Hay in turn wrote that King was "the sweetest-natured creature the lord ever made." Adams, who with Hay referred to King as "our Gorgeous Rex," wrote after King's death that he and Hay "were his slaves, and he was good to us. He was the ideal companion of our lives." And Hay, who relied on Adams as a daily confidante for much of his life, wrote of one of Adams's many travels, "I cannot tell you how my heart sinks at the thought of you going away without me." When Adams does go, Hay writes, "I hunger and thirst for the sight of you."

The Five of Hearts suffers from a few notable absences. Brooks Adams, Henry's brilliant and eccentric brother, with whom he was very close until the last years of his life, is completely missing. This seems particularly unfortunate, given Brooks's substantial influence not just on Henry Adams but also on Theodore Roosevelt. By ignoring Brooks, Miss O'Toole has left out all reference to his and Henry's common anxieties about the future of historiography. This was a late passion that led Henry Adams into correspondence with notable scientists of his day and his penultimate and most bizarre essays, his open "Letter to American Teachers of History" and "The Rule of Phase Applied to History." One would have enjoyed learning what frame of mind he was in when he wrote them. Instead, O'Toole devotes several pages to Constance Fenimore Woolson, who had an ultimately fatal attraction for Henry James, but whose own connection to the Hearts was relatively thin, and, so far as Adams was concerned, nonexistent.

While Miss O'Toole's introduction admits some discomfort with Adams's persistent anti-Semitism and Hay's hatred of immigrants, she makes little mention or example of either of these in the book itself. King, likewise, is given little criticism for his fiscal irresponsibility or the chronic abandonment of his family. O'Toole has by and large let her players speak for themselves, but her choice of letters allows her subjects to come across as more measured and enlightened and just plain *right* than anyone could be. Airing out the prejudices and blind spots of the Hearts would have added much, I think, to the humanity O'Toole has gone so far toward giving them.

Henry Adams believed the sacrifices he and his friends made were unappreciated by the vulgar American public; perhaps the final insult to Adams and his circle was the destruction, in the 1920s, of Richardson's Hay and Adams houses, which may have been so attuned to their original occupants that no one else could live in them. Whatever the reason, the site now supports the exclusive Hay-Adams Hotel, where I happened to stay for a week during Mikhail Gorbachev's 1987 visit. Breakfast in The Henry Adams Room cost roughly twenty dollars for coffee, orange juice, and a roll, and neither the conversation nor the clientele, I can assure you, live up to the standard set when the Five of Hearts ran the joint.

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The Reader Replies

Michelet Reconsidered

Eugen Weber in his reconsideration of Michelet (AMERICAN SCHOLAR, Winter 1991) tells us, "in brief," that chronic constipation led to vaginal constriction in Athenaïs and consequently to painful coitus. Dyspareunia caused by vaginismus is certainly not rare, but it can hardly be attributed to chronic constipation in the absence of organic disease. One could as logically assume that vaginismus induced constipation. Perhaps Professor Weber's assumption should be reconsidered in the light of modern knowledge of pathophysiology rather than offered speculatively. The causes of frigidity are complex indeed and require considerably deeper investigation.

JOHN H. FELTS, M.D.
Professor of Medicine
The Bowman Gray School of Medicine
Wake Forest University
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

In Eugen Weber's "Michelet Reconsidered" from the Winter 1991 issue: p. 54—". . . winkle out . . ."; p. 59—". . . turfed out . . ."; p. 60—". . . *artisanal* experience . . ."; p. 61—". . . but whom he leaves *on* a final . . ."; p. 63—". . . it was education on the hoof . . . ." The first two are English slang. I have never heard an American use them. "Turf" in the sense used above appears in OED Supplement IV. But the citations are all conversations in novels. These terms are out of place in the kind of article in which they appear. "Artisanal" is not in any of my dictionaries. Perhaps there is a like adjective in the author's native tongue. ". . . leaves on . . ." doesn't make sense. Does he mean ". . . leaves with . . ."? What does the last phrase mean? At best it is graceless. Except for the ban on obscenities, the *New York Times* seems to have given up any effort to maintain standards. (Safire approved "enthused" a while ago.) For AMERICAN SCHOLAR to do likewise is to give up a major reason for its existence.

WILLIAM H. HERDER
Somerville, New Jersey

EUGEN WEBER replies: "In brief" refers to the preceding sentence in my text, which attributes the information with which Dr. Felts disagrees to Dr. Mitzman. I'm sorry he got it wrong.

As for Mr. Herder's strictures, he is quite right: I write in English. For the rest, in 1579 already, we find Edmund Spenser complaining that "our English tongue" is being turned into "a gallimaufry or hodgepodge." Yet we still manage reasonably well.

Dame Edith

Perdita Schaffner's essay "A Day at the St. Regis with Dame Edith" (Winter 1991) does not mention the year of the Sitwell "Grand Tour" through the Middle West, Boston, Yale, and New York. It was 1948. I was a Yale law student at the time, and although great banks of fog have rolled in on my memory, I never lost sight of Dame Edith in New Haven.

Of course, her Modigliani head and Tudor robes would have been permanent memory aids for anyone. The *New Statesman* once described her thus: ". . . great rings load the fingers, the hands are fastidiously displayed, the eye-sockets have been thumbed by a master, the eyes themselves haunt, disdain, trouble indifference, and the fashions are century-old with a telling simplification." What fixed her image in mind, however, was the way she treated her poetry. Only once before had I seen anything quite like it.

The setting was Yale's main auditorium, Woolsey Hall. Dame Edith strode out across the thrust stage against its backdrop of pipe organs. In retrospect, it seems like a wall of exclamation marks for the singularity of her performance. I remember the flowing robe, perhaps a turban and certainly an enormous pendant swinging from a long chain around her neck. She came out from stage left carrying a sheaf of manuscript, laid it upon a small bare table, then sat and began to read.

Although I can't recall the poetry, I am quite certain that "Facade" was one of the things she read. Years ago I saw the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company perform Sir William Walton's delightful "Facade" and heard how the Sitwell text had animated his music and the dance. The same dancing rhythm was in Dame Edith's reading that afternoon. I can summon no words from her reading, but the sound and the beat of "Facade" as dance are still perfectly clear: *Dee da ta, Dee da ta, Dee da ta. Dee.*

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She was a spirited reader, suggesting at the outset that she too enjoyed every poet's consummate pleasure, publicly declaiming one's work. Or so I thought until she did a curious thing a few minutes into it. Clearly in the middle of a poem, she halted suddenly, peeled a few sheets from the manuscript and with total indifference let them flutter to the floor. Then, as if leaping across a textual trench she had dug herself, she pressed on without stumbling in it.

One such episode would have been forgettable, but every few minutes throughout the entire reading she kept trenching her poems the same way. This was not editing on the run, nor displaying one more Sitwellian eccentricity, but something quite different. Rather than share with the audience the view of life she expressed in her poetry, she simply took the poetry and publicly kicked it around. The ballet "Facade" is full of the same irreverent farce.

There was no laughter or even nervous snickering in the audience of "lecture ladies" from the genteel element of New Haven society, solemn members of the faculty, and curious students. It appeared clear from their silence that they didn't quite know what to make of it all. My own modest view is there weren't enough of them familiar with the Marx Brothers canon to understand what was going on. In "A Night at the Opera" there is a scene, as unforgettable as Dame Edith's performance that afternoon, that foretold her Woolsey Hall shenanigans. Groucho holds up a singer's contract several yards long and begins to read and interpret its legalisms for Chico, makes a mindless comment, rips off about a foot of it and lets it fall. Every few seconds he yanks off another foot until he is down to what he calls the "sanity clause," which Chico rejects because everybody knows "dere isa no sanity clause."

Groucho was a faster reader, but the Dada in his effort was the Dada in Dame Edith's as well.

SEYMOUR I. TOLL
Cynwyd, Pennsylvania

The New Segregation on Campus

Dinesh D'Souza's hard-hitting article "The New Segregation on Campus" (Winter 1991) inadvertently illustrates a principle that George Orwell taught us: how much the subversion of political power depends on the debasement of language. The affirmative action movement is a rich source of examples, as it has translated equal opportunity into unequal preferential treatment, confused goals with quotas, redefined discrimination in terms of result and not process, etc. After enough repetition even people who know better, such as D'Souza, become accustomed to using such euphemisms.

His article falls into this trap by repeatedly referring to the poor preparation of many minority students as the root of various problems, where what he really means is poor performance. The causes of their failure do indeed often include poor preparation. But in many cases limitations of ability, as well as personal and cultural factors that fail to encourage appropriate motivation, may be more important.

If we wish, with D'Souza, to encourage our academic administrations to deal with the problems of minority students honestly and effectively, we must try to understand the reasons for poor performance, instead of pretending that they must lie simply in preparation. The first step is to say performance when we mean performance.

BERNARD D. DAVIS
Professor of Bacterial Physiology Emeritus
Harvard Medical School
Boston, Massachusetts

Dinesh D'Souza in "The New Segregation on Campus" does an adequate job of describing the problems encountered by those who have attempted to bring progressive leadership in the area of race to the campus and to help the academy play its role as a "leading indicator" for society. But he errs when he blames university activists and leaders who have taken racism and civil rights seriously for the fact that success remains elusive. As one who has worked with minority students in several campuses and regions of the nation, I know the frustration involved in overcoming academic prejudice, but I also know the grace and acceptance that has been extended to me by the black, Latino, Asian, and international students with whom I have worked.

D'Souza does best when he deals with the external problems brought to the campus, but even here he fails to recognize how far from complete Martin Luther King, Jr.'s victory in the mid-1960s was or how much residual and renewed racism is brought to campus by each new class of white students. The neo-conservative "red herring" of reverse discrimination purveyed by the Reagan-Bush regimes has legitimated a powerful reactionary racism. Even while there is greater acceptance of inter-racial dating along with considerable negative reaction to it, there has been a pervasive disregard for social inequities and issues of cultural pluralism. It would be foolish to expect universities to be able to correct exterior social and cultural problems of this dimension and complexity even with positive leadership from the president and other social leaders.

D'Souza remains blind to the importance of curricular pluralism and to the fraudulence of white male faculty claims that minorities and women are debasing academic standards. White men who were schooled in the Western classics and whose posi-

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tions depend on scholarly reputations in this ethnic enclave are not often eager to have the "classics" redefined to include materials, languages, and perspectives that they have not mastered. The challenge of intellectual open-mindedness threatens anyone whose own prejudices are called into question. It is no surprise that the members of the "good old boys" of the faculty club often responded emotionally or that the incompetents who had managed to secure a safe place in the academic woodwork would use every prejudice possible to defame the competence of those who threatened them. The popularity of William Bennett's "West is best" crusade and of the empty laments of Alan Bloom and others about how the decay in scholarship is to be blamed on women and minorities is based on the desire of those in power to blame others for their own sins.

There is no question that support for public education in America has been inadequate during these reactionary presidencies. At the same time there has been little of note to be seen from academics or scholars that would make the image of the educated person a glowing moral example. Education has been touted as the path to a good (read high-pay) job, not as the path to wisdom and social responsibility. Research has been sold to the highest bidder and academic freedom reduced to an entrepreneurial right. This has not made the questions of interest to the poor or the Third World "interesting" to faculties or administrations worried about their budgets.

When these major factors are accounted in the equation, it is small wonder that universities have not become wonderful examples of racial harmony. But this does not suggest that the strategy of diversity and pluralism or the necessity and validity of ethnic-based student organizations and admissions policies is wrong. Instead of blaming the victims and those who have worked with sincerity and dedication for progressive change, it makes sense to focus blame on those who have resisted progress. Racism is primarily a white problem because white power still runs things. Ethnic racism and other prejudices are also problems, but have much less to do with the problems of society and campus. If we could address white racism effectively, I believe the other areas of racism would disappear rather quickly.

The problem with the integration model continues to be that the definition of humanity projected is that of WASP culture. Until white ethnicity is taken seriously as something other than a parody of Yuppie values and no longer is the stamp of social approval and respectability, it will be necessary for non-whites to oppose its tyranny as well as discover their own valid ethnicity. The salad days can only be realized when white ethnicity is only one ingredient, not the lettuce. The irony is that those who stand to gain the most are the whites who continue to be the victims of their own racism and self-delusion.

Assuming that we will have a "new world order," which is truly international and not a Pax Americana, Americans will have to learn to live in a pluralistic world where understanding several languages and cultural perspectives will be the vital qualities of the educated person and successful citizen. A knowledge of Asian, African, and Latin American classics will be essential for communication and for scholarship. I also favor learning the Western classics, but I know that the importance of discovering one's own culture and tradition is best nurtured in the plural interaction of cultures.

It is good to be reminded that what has been done to address racism in the university is not enough. I am glad that D'Souza is not satisfied to have the new segregated campus as a way to keep ethnic minorities in their place and aspires to a higher vision of society. But it would help if he and his counterparts would address the real causes rather than blame the victims and those who have made what progress has been made. It would be very nice to find a conservative who could transcend reactionary responses to important problems.

REVEREND DONALD R. CAUGHEY
Corvallis, Oregon

Emmett Till

I have nothing material to contribute to the exchange about Emmett Till that appeared in the Winter 1991 Reader Replies section of the SCHOLAR, but I do wish to comment on Professor Richard L. Aynes's correct statement that Emmett Till "was presumed innocent until his guilt was proven beyond a reasonable doubt"; and on his incorrect inference that therefore "Emmett Till died a completely innocent person."

The inference confuses (as is often done, abetted by the abbreviation "innocent until proven guilty") the legal presumption of innocence—which refers to legal procedure and to a suspension of judgment—with a factual assertion of innocence. That confusion produces incoherence.

If a person were factually innocent until proven guilty, he wouldn't have committed the crime of which he is convicted until he is convicted. But the conviction indicates he did commit the crime before he was convicted, i.e., he was factually guilty before being found legally guilty.

Thus, Emmett Till, as is any other unconvicted person, was legally innocent of any crime. However, whether he was factually innocent, as Professor Aynes suggests, is quite independent of the

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legal presumption from which nothing factual can be inferred.

ERNEST VAN DEN HAAG
New York, New York

White Guilt

The article by Shelby Steele in the Autumn 1990 SCHOLAR, "White Guilt," should have been appropriately entitled "White Fear." Mr. Steele's central argument is based on an incident that I would interpret quite differently than he does. The situation of two black men accosting an "affluent white businessman" in a men's room and coercing him into giving the black attendant a twenty-dollar tip does not speak of fear from guilt, but fear from intimidation.

It is this turning upside down of the situation that is to me the most important aspect of Mr. Steele's article and goes a long way to illustrating what is wrong in the current situation regarding civil rights. The greatness of Martin Luther King's leadership was his demand that a historical tragedy be righted by full and equal access. That demand was espoused by many whites as just even though they most probably felt no sense of personal guilt which Mr. Steele believes.

This justification is now used by many blacks to create a special morality that justifies intimidation and hostile behavior. It is the prevalence of this attitude that has turned whatever white guilt there may have been into white fear and hostility. It is not a happy turn of events.

DAVID ALBENDA
New York, New York

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